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TROUBADOUR

BOOKS BY

ALFRED KREYMBORG

LOVE AND LIFE AND OTHER STUDIES
APOSTROPHES
ERNA VITEK, A NOVEL
MUSHROOMS
BLOOD OF THINGS
PLAYS FOR MERRY ANDREWS
PUPPET PLAYS
LESS LONELY
TROUBADOUR, AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Editor of the Anthologies:

OTHERS FOR 1916
OTHERS FOR 1917
OTHERS FOR 1919

In Preparation:

THERE'S A MOON TO-NIGHT
PARALLELS AND OTHER POEMS
ROCKING CHAIRS AND OTHER PLAYS

TROUBADOUR

An Autobiography

ALFRED KREYMBORG

AUTHOR OF MUSHROOMS, PUPPET PLAYS,
LESS LONELY, ETC.

WITHDRAWN
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BONI AND LIVERIGHT
Publishers :: :: New York
M C M X X V

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Printed in the United States of America

First printing, February, 1925
Second printing, March, 1925

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For
DOROTHY

38759

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PART I
OLLIE

PRELUDE

KNUCKLES ON THE DOOR

I HAVE seen them look tired, very tired, weary, very weary, and almost as pale, starved and haggard as old beggars in streets where the passerby is insensible to all but himself. I have known them to speak hopefully, gesticulate excitedly, move with an unpremeditated suddenness, only to relapse into a sing-song hopelessness, a reiterate silence, in which all but the heart lay quiescent. I have found gods in their eyes when ecstasies came; devils and trolls with the return of disenchantment and terror; but most of the time, human beings, and often the whole human race. I discovered the whole human race whenever I felt they craved liberation. Liberation from the cell they lived in and brooded in, from the dark, mysterious self, flesh and spirit, solitude, loneliness. Liberation through communication with some kindred self, flesh and spirit, solitude, loneliness. I have heard them come up the stairs of a dismal, rickety building, somewhere at the top of which, inside a monastic room, I happened to be living; heard their knuckles on the door, familiar, friendly knuckles, tapping the shy question: "Are you in?" And I have gone to their rooms with a similar step and shyness, similar knuckles and noises, similar hopes and hopelessness.

These are not ghosts I try to recall, nor dead people, not even old people; but young, very young people, in pursuit of some vision or other, in the days when Manhattan Island had not yet progressed to the height of the Woolworth Tower or the depth of the Interborough Subway. Most of the street car lines, trucks, carriages and cabs were run by horses; and a man, nervously driving his first gasoline car, was greeted by

scrambling, sceptical children with the derisive cry: "Get a horse!"

To the knuckles I try to recall, my door opened, or their door to me—whenever I or they happened to be in. If we were out, or too busy to answer, the caller went elsewhere, tried another door among the few he knew; and failing there as well, tried the streets, perhaps, or some haunt among the few he knew. One was rarely reckless in those days. If one happened to be in, one did not call out briskly, "Come in." One affected a preliminary caution, not because the city was full of strangers mostly, or that it is, even now, full of strangers mostly. Although the knuckles sounded familiar, one could never be quite positive as to the face outside the door. Of all characters, the most protean are, and doubtless always have been and will be, creditors. Assuming some histrionic disguise, even in this Masonic trait of knuckles on the door, the landlord, gas man or tax inspector might lure one into a careless welcome at an hour in one's worldly condition when those gentry were, for this or that evasive reason, not as welcome as they might be a little later in the week, or the month, or the year.

Nevertheless, some idiosyncrasy on the part of the visitor usually betrayed his identity. Surely, that shuffling irregularity and tapping hesitancy could belong to no other feet and hand than those which dangled from the awkward extremities of the diffident Albert Teller—the self-conscious son of a tailor whose chief claim to the affection of a group to which we belonged in our teens reposed in the circumstance that, no matter how steadily one lost at chess to other people, one could turn to him, defeat him and recover one's pride. Surely, that gaiety of approach and confident attack could be the habitual expression of no other imp of whimsicality than Alanson Hartpence; or that slow, measured ascent, aristocratic cough, measured stride in the hall, second aristocratic cough, and austere rhythm on the pane of opaque glass unmistakably

announced the arrival of no less a person, even in those days, than the long lean eagle from the hills of Maine—Marsden Hartley. Or that staccato movement—must the fellow always hurry?—was certain to bring Ernest Roth, the blue-eyed etcher we all called Louis, because he called us all Louis; whose pet epithet, after one of us played a bit of music, popped out: *"Louis, jetzt spiel a mal a Walzer!"*

And so, one left what one was doing at the moment, or attempting, or thinking. Very likely, one felt particularly lonely —and poignantly glad of the step and the knock. And one had a safe instinct he must be lonely too—in his way—otherwise, why did he come? There were so few of you then, and so many of the others, the stranger and the passerby. Loneliness had grown as much a part of you as your body—a thing to escape if you could. So you left your window, if it was daytime, or your lamp, if it was night, went over to the door, unconsciously opened your hand, laid the fingers round the knob and opened the door. Invariably, the figure at the door would call out, "Hello," and you would call out, "Hello," and without further hesitation, "Come in." Your hands would greet each other as well—sometimes for the last time—though you never knew it then. It would be hard to recall the precise variation of that pressure; the temperature of it; the mood of the moment which dictated it;and the immediate effect, or the effect long after, the effect right now, of the contact. Except to state that it drew you out of yourself for a while, and draws you out now, in the attempted re-creation of a past, almost the whole of which is out of sight, out of sound; and the residue, the wistful residue, a vague, though radiant recollection, which has in it, however, somehow, somewhere, the intrinsic power to help you along whenever you need it. You may not acknowledge this; it may not be necessary to do so; it is hardly a question of debits and credits. You may not be aware of it;

this isn't necessary either. The contact continues; has become a part of you; you are a multiple being.

Minus the intrusion of such a parenthesis, you would hold the door wide for him. Invariably, if he was the right sort, he would hem and haw: "But I'm disturbing you?" Invariably, you would retort: "Not at all, not at all, come in, come in." And he would. And you shut the door gently and followed him. Very likely, you did not have to invite him to take off his coat, throw it over your extra chair and drop himself in his favorite nook on the couch. Such formalities had passed with the shutting of the door on former occasions. There were other questions now, familiar inquiries, as you seated yourself in your chair at the table, helped him light what he was fond of smoking, lit what you were fond of, and as host ventured the proverbial introduction: "Well—how are things?"

Usually, he answered: "So so."

In those days, "So so" was always to be interpreted as "Not so good." But you caught the courageous smile which decorated the response—one you would have assumed had he fired the question—and continued cheerfully: "You mean to say you've sold that story of yours?" (Or that "poem," "drawing," "etching," "sculpture," "painting," "novel," "play.")

He would wag his head in a fashion you had seen it wag before, in a fashion you had often wagged your own.

"You don't mean to say that swine of a sheet had the nerve——"

"I do—they did—but——"

"Yes, yes?"

"The editor said——"

"The editor himself?"

"Yes, the editor himself—said he liked the story——"

"That's simply wonderful, isn't it?—it's never happened before?"——

"Not to me——"

"Nor to me."

You both stopped. Rolled this miracle on your tongues. Let it glide down sensuously, dreamily, drowsily. Would it ever happen to you that some editor—no matter who, how, why——

"Did he sign the letter himself?"

"He did."

"What else did he say?"

"That he liked it—but it didn't quite fit in with their present policy——"

"I see——"

"But that he'd be glad—to read other things of mine—if I'd favor him again——"

"Favor him?"

"That's the word he used."

"Wonderful, isn't it?"

"Considering it's never happened before—yes——"

"Did you bring the letter?"

"Of course."

"Let's have a look at it."

As he drew closer, trying to put on a casual air, and you waited for him to unfold the famous document, a host of slender slips of printed paper, oblong parallelograms, pink, blue, gray, green, brown, began a slow, mocking dance in your brain, while you sat in a corner and watched them, dully wondering how many more would join the dance, how many more would the postman bring, how many more would you walk to the bottom of four flights of stairs to remove from your black tin box in the vestibule and climb to the top of four flights of stairs to slit open and release, along with the rejected manuscript, the sheets you had typed so neatly, folded so neatly, sent so neatly, the white thing you had spent so many hours on, days on, weeks on, so much energy, blood, hope, doubt, despair, trying to make it speak, to fill it with you, cajoling it, imploring it, revising it, only to have it return, speechless, help-

less, inanimate, folded where you had folded it, with the identical creases, and no sign to betray the thing had been touched at all, not even a smudge or a thumb print to prove the thing had ever left you, no clue but another dancer, quite like the last, pink, blue, gray, green———

"Here it is!"

"What—oh—let me see."

The dervishes vanished. Your friend returned from afar. Or you returned to him. Leaned over the table with him, shoulder to shoulder. And examined the document together—you for the first time, he for the twentieth, thirtieth, fortieth.

Anyone looking in at the window, anyone crawling up the fire-escape from the backyard below—(why should he come up that way—what should prompt such buffoonery? But there was once such a man, such a madman. Did I not come back on a certain summer morning, with a sorely needed new suit, a light-weight, pearl-gray combination, nice and cool without lining, I bought at a Siegel-Cooper sale—aided by the friendly Hartpence—for the sum of seven dollars? And did we not spread the suit on the couch, decide it wasn't bad, though he snickered a little—not at the suit but at the thought of me inside—my embarrassment in new clothes—always so obvious? Did we not go out, leave it behind because I didn't dare wear it at once, lock the door, trail off to our bakery for lunch—and then hurry back with others who wanted to eye the bargain? We unlocked the door. The nudging sight-seers entered. They helped me look about—searched under the couch as well. The suit had disappeared—the window was still open—and Hartpence was the first to congratulate the late owner: "You would have looked like the devil—especially after the first rain——")

Anyone, I say, looking in at that window, might have asked many plausible questions as to those fellows in there—examining a mere piece of paper. What did they find or expect to

find? Does it take so long to read such a thing? Maybe it's a chart, a map, a plan? Are they architects? But they look too young and frail to be building things? And so impractical, unbusiness-like—where do they come in, how do they belong? They're so pale, serious, foreign, if they belong anywhere at all, they've surely picked out the right hole? There's nothing in them worth worrying about.

Hello—one of them is nodding now—so is the other? What makes him raise his head—and the other one too? And why do they smile at each other—is the paper amusing? What's the dark fellow saying—and the blond one replying?

"It's encouraging, isn't it?"

"It certainly is!"

What makes them shake hands?

I

PLAYING WITH CHEMICALS

RE-CREATING people is a process subject to tenacious resistance when you have less than dust to reanimate and only words for the chemicals. Notwithstanding the most superhuman skill, brought to the service of the most passionate longing to give life to the past, images, composed of a few salient outlines and a modicum of harmonious tones, will be the sole semblance art is able to snatch from nature. After one has eyed the sun a number of years and felt it methodically carry a parcel of oneself to the west, one is everlastingly tempted to sigh: If I had the same life to live over again, I would have done this and not have done that, paid more attention to this and less to that, been more careful here and not so careful there, and I would have, should have, might have, possibly, probably . . . until one is stopped by a shorter sigh, a much more sensible riposte: What's the use of wondering that?

Nevertheless, the longer sigh persists, especially if one is considering the people who gave one life, whose hands and mouths and bodies uniting started one going and keep one going, despite the fact that they separated many years ago, joined and mingled with the chemicals of the earth about twenty years ago and fell to dust and to less than dust, who can say when . . . leaving nothing more tangible than varied hypotheses, gigantic or infinitesimal queries one asks of the silence, and only the silence can answer. One begins a variation of the same theme; bargains with echoes at the depths of solitude, no matter how foolhardy the address to the past one employs:

If I had the same life t[illegible] again—if only with respect to what those two di[illegible]ard to myself—let alone

what they did with regard to each other and the four children born before me. And their surroundings, the background they moved about in, their means and methods of keeping themselves alive. And their dream, so much larger than themselves, but not large enough to encompass much of the world they lived in. And their defeats, tragedies, disillusionment—and their courage, their courage. If I could go back—steal away to the cot in the room where she lay—struggling—repeating one phrase until she could repeat it no longer—*I don't want to leave you.* If I could go back to that sound—and say what I wanted to say then—and couldn't—and add to it all I've wanted to say since—and want to say now—and can't. . . .

And the other—who followed her—and was very silent about it. Who held the knowledge of the ages in his eyes—turned them slowly to each of us standing near—with no more fiction in their depths—a fact each of us tried to avoid. If I could steal back to that silence—and divert that knowledge of his, not by trying to say something—but by laying his old chessboard between us, letting him take the white pieces and open with a gambit. Not with the Queen's, with its modern devices of safety first—but with one of the King's—like Paul Morphy before him—the meteoric master he idolized and emulated. I should have boldly grabbed the pawn and accepted the gambit I always declined—to his utter scorn and disgust—if only to give him the pleasure, just once, of converting me to his ways—and of nodding and imagining a future, at least—with myself an exact replica of himself—instead of the queer, frail, incomprehensible, self-centred child he had had to greet so often with his favorite phrase: *Noch so alt und doch so dumm.* . . .

In the spring of 1921, one was invited to participate in the unveiling of an international magazine of the arts, to be called

Broom and to be published in Rome. As one had never crossed an ocean and anticipated an enticing opportunity to introduce lesser known American artists abroad, the invitation was accepted. In view of the surveillance under which Americans were held and are still held in their own country, one had to sign several governmental papers, present oneself at various departments of inquisition, effect an income tax clearance (no serious obstacle), and show beyond peradventure that, if one had not been born in the United States, one had proof positive of a required citizenship somewhere. A photograph of one's birth certificate, in case such a paper existed, would be obtainable, I was assured, at the Department of Health of the City of New York. Among the documents I have carried from place to place, the photograph I was given in response to a decidedly anxious inquiry enjoys a high station. First of all, I had never known the address of my birth; and secondly, I soon discovered the record had been entered by a person obviously careless or unwittingly inaccurate in the announcement of my arrival.

The record is headed: State of New York, County of New York, City of New York, Birth Return 384313. Opposite the title, Name of Child, two errors in spelling occur: Alfried F. Kreymburg. There is no mistaking the vigorously dotted i, nor the u, instead of o. The middle initial stands for Francis: after an eccentric uncle who pursued his livelihood as a sign-painter, bill-poster and engraver of names on show-windows and whose greatest claim to fame in the family was achieved through the resplendent manipulation of his brushes one portentous day when the Indian with the raised hatchet in front of my father's cigar store needed a fresh coat of impressionistic paint. As to the pedigree of the Alfred, I have been told a dubious debate had ensued at the christening, and, after a number of family names had been eliminated, my father seized the business directory and soon came upon

Alfred—who, he asseverated, was the first king of England, and who, my mother added, "let the loaves burn." There were few quarrels in the family; this was not one of them; and so the name was affixed.

The next three entries are beyond dispute: Sex, Male; Color or Race, White; Date of Birth, Dec. 10, 1883. Then comes the place of birth: 200 East 56th Street. What the building looked like—what it looks like now—whether it is still there—or whether it has been supplanted, as all things are eventually supplanted, here in New York—I don't know. I have never had the requisite curiosity to retrace my steps in that direction.

Then follows the Christian name of the Father, which is misspelled or Anglicized, Herman; and the Maiden Name of the Mother, Louisa Nascher (the German for sweet-tooth). Then the birthplace and age of the Mother, America—33 years; and the birthplace, age and occupation of the Father, Germany—43—Segar-packer. The last line is devoted to the signature of the Medical Attendant, Katie Miller. The handwriting throughout is hers. I do not venture this aside in a spirit of criticism. On the contrary, I am grateful the lady was present on that far-off occasion, and if ever I meet her again, I shall thank her, *Wahrheit und Dichtung,* for being the first person to write about me.

There have been others since, others beside myself, who have said things about me on paper. Only a few days ago, I picked up a volume of American stories, in which there is a tale about horses—the book is called Horses and Men—and in this tale, a certain minor character appears. I happen to know the author, Sherwood Anderson—a fine, handsome fellow and a poetic realist—but I don't know the minor character. Naturally not. The work is a work of fiction. This character, a tall man with a black mustache, is a wealthy horse-dealer and only appears at the beginning of the tale—"standing

there, pulling his mustache and looking as sad as a sick crane." Now, it happens that I know nothing about horses and horse-dealers. I have only been in the saddle, by actual count, once in forty years. And that was not on a horse, but on the back of a mule, who carried me, sight-seeing, from the top to the bottom and the bottom to the top of the Grand Canyon of Arizona—a marvellous trip all human beings who go there take at least once—and one human being will never take twice. Well, the name of the horse-dealer in the tale by Sherwood Anderson is, letter for letter and word for word, *Alfred Kreymborg*—thus proving that authors are better spellers than medical attendants.

My brother (the other surviving member of the family) and I used to claim, doubtless with an air of pardonable pride: We're the only Kreymborgs on earth. The name, assuredly, is unique enough to be the only one of its kind extant. Certainly, it has caused us the most acute embarrassment in answering questions concerning its origin—whether Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Flemish or what not—and the utmost discomfiture in spelling and pronouncing it on every occasion we were introduced to strangers, only to have them mispronounce it and ask us kindly to spell and pronounce it once more. Most people, especially boys, for the sake of greater ease, converted it into nicknames—like Krimmie, Kramie, Crumb, Cranberry—or into puns, the most glaring of which was perpetrated by a grown-up, the late William Marion Reedy, on one's first visit to Chicago and one's first meeting, not alone with the Solon of St. Louis, but with Edgar Lee Masters of Spoon River and Carl Sandburg of Galesburg, who sat on either side of the founder of the Mirror at a lunch table to which one had been invited and from which one was hailed: "Here comes the man who put the crime in Kreymborg." We used to, I say, claim that we were the only folk of that name on earth; but

events have a curious habit of contradicting one's illusions about the truth, even in this, I doubt not, trivial matter.

Some years ago, I received a postal card from Amsterdam, Holland, with a drawing of a huge building, obviously belonging to a prosperous Dutch clothing concern. Right across the façade, in bold, high letters, stood my own name.

Gordon Craig, who sent the card, is no writer of fiction, but a man of the theatre and a playboy. Therefore, when I received it, examined the drawing and read and re-read the heading, I had every reason for suspecting he was indulging in a hoax at my expense. However, as I have said, I went to Italy nearly three years ago. Later on, I travelled north gradually—and before leaving the continent, stopped in Amsterdam. I visited some of the customary sights: the canals, the Ghetto, Rembrandt's museum; only to be led away by a persistent, a more personal whim. So I searched for and found the building. And studied the heading—letter for letter, word for word.

I did not enter the store, introduce myself, compare pedigrees. I simply paced back and forth, with that huge place in my eye and my father's last shop in my memory. I can recall that a squirrel ran round my head, and the tiny devil chattered: If you had your life to live over again—had you been born here in Amsterdam, along these canals, among these old scenes and Dutch burghers, perhaps in that very house; had you grown up under the influence of these affluent cultural surroundings—instead of over there, in New York, among her dizzy streets, in some obscure house, room, cell, or whatever it was. . . .

II

OLLIE GOES TO CHURCH

THERE was still another nickname, the sound of which never delighted me, the more so as it had managed to fasten itself onto one's Christian name, clung there throughout one's babyhood, childhood, boyhood and, thanks to a few intimate numskulls, most of them sentimental relatives, continued in use long after Ollie had graduated from the grammar school on Ninety-sixth Street, and from short pants into long trousers. Ollie first entered the latter on the morning of his confirmation in the church on Ninety-first Street. No less a prelate than Archbishop Corrigan presided; the mysterious scent of whose hands, held over Ollie's head, has not entirely evaporated from memory. His parents were not Roman Catholics—not both of them. His father was a Roman Catholic, of sorts, and his mother a Lutheran, of sorts. His brother Carl, seven years older than himself, had been baptized a Lutheran. In Ollie's case, therefore, a balance had been attained in the family.

I am afraid neither of the parents could have been considered a devout sectarian. Where the other three children were born and what their names, I haven't the slightest idea. They passed out of the family before Ollie was conscious of them or could combine a series of coherent syllables on his own account. Nor am I aware how those three died, although I've heard one relative claim: Through medical incompetence; your parents couldn't call in the right doctors; couldn't quite afford them and so on; and another one sigh: Two of them were boys, the other a girl. The other a sister—that thought has haunted me often. Nor am I certain as to the place where the parents were wedded—in what church, if any—whether

Roman Catholic or Lutheran—and how they effected a compromise. One relative has stated—in St. Mark's in the Bouwerie—an assertion I have never tried to prove or disprove.

There was an opportunity to corner the truth or fiction last spring, but something in me demurred—a chronic dislike or evasion of facts, a romantic fondness for dramatic situations, an habitual reticence. I had been invited by Mr. George Jay Smith, of the Board of Education, to read aloud a group of my poems in St. Mark's—now Dr. Norman Guthrie's church. When my turn in the program came, after several other poets had concluded their numbers, I was powerless to compete with the fancy that I was standing under a roof where, about a half century before, they might have stood: she in white and he in black; she a little over five, he a little under six feet tall; she with her gentleness, he with his dignity; and both of them radiant, eager, visionary—with "tomorrow and tomorrow" just ahead. A curious incongruity between that past and present urged a still more poignant whim to dictate the particular selection of poems to be read. Those two had never had the smallest suspicion that the idiosyncrasies of Ollie would ever develop or degenerate, as the case may be, into a profession so weird, so hopelessly impractical and completely remote from the shop on Third Avenue and Ninety-fourth Street—as poetry. And so, after one or two casual numbers, I inserted one or two with a not too obvious reference to the parents of Ollie. . . .

Ollie had never known his parents to attend church services of any sort. Nor had he known his brother to attend—nor himself to attend—often. His mother expected him to go of a Sunday morning to the church on Ninety-first Street. She didn't say it in so many words. She rarely, if ever, ordered anything. Automatically, after a Sunday breakfast, the traditional *Pfannekuchen* and coffee, Ollie went out to the store—just beyond the dining-room—and his mother behind the long counter. She drew forth the wooden till, took out a couple

of pennies and handed these over to him. Sometimes she said: "Be a good boy now." This meant, indirectly, he had not been as good as he might have been during the week, and here was a lively opening to make up, by dropping one of the coins into the collection plate and the other into his pocket. More often she would say: "Be careful now—look where you go." This was a reminder that an ice wagon had recently knocked him down while he was blindly chasing a playmate. Usually, she said nothing at all; but nodded once or twice as she gave him the pennies.

Need I add that the penny for the plate did not always reach its Christian destination, but joined its more pagan brother? There were quite a number of consecutive Sundays when Ollie set forth with dutiful intentions on his way from Ninety-fourth to Ninety-first Street. Nowadays, this is merely three direct blocks; but in those days, applied to a short-legged, easily tempted child, it was considerably longer and somewhat erratic. Worst of all, at his appointed destination, the catechism teacher would confront him with her chilly query, pointing to the previous Sunday: "What excuse is it this time, sir?" And in between that apparition and Ollie bound for church, there were powerful sweet shops—painfully familiar dragons with their wide-open maws holding the most heartlessly cunning displays of cream drops, jelly-beans, lollipops, lozenges, chewing gum. Down in himself, no truly enduring strength offered to fortify him against such an array of show-windows. After he had conquered the first, by ignoring it utterly, and the second, by ignoring it almost as much, the third or the fourth would weaken his resolution sufficiently for the fifth to lead his feet astray. It was then one found him with his nose pressed against the glass and his hands deep in his pockets. Very likely, the spectacle which had concluded his downfall was Zeman's double show-window—with candies multiplied beyond mere human endurance.

One should not overlook, or at the least not deny, evidences of a final struggle. The boy's palms and fingers, nerves all the way up and down his body, fought off the Christian coin, anxious to join its brother in the other pocket. It not only joined that brother, but many an antecedent that had passed from Ollie to Zeman himself—the shopkeeper's mustaches bristling with the ready good nature of one of Beelzebub's ministers. The boy rarely enjoyed the sweets as he would have on a week-day. A certain after-taste, an uneasiness at the bottom of him, caused him to avoid looking at people lest they see through him, and to shun the church itself—with its steeple pointing to a judgment day.

He might have looked at heaven, notwithstanding all the houses in the way; but he kept looking at the pavement, even though hell lay somewhere below. As Miss Jonas had a pleasant way of warning all the boys. And she warned them about confession—terrified them into going—till they all went —except Ollie. Not even old Father Samuel, with the steady, round eyes, or old Father Theobald, with the genial stomach, had ever had the experience of listening to him. He confessed things to himself, it is true; hid them deeper and darker down vague unhappy recesses. But he soon forgot many of them, even most of them. Had people asked him what sin he had committed at such and such a time, he would have had trouble recalling it; might have denied he had done it.

Knowing Ollie's mother, some kindly soul might have asked: "But why not go and tell her? You know she wouldn't scold you, wouldn't say a word? You must learn to speak, get rid of these things now. Remember the last time she defended you to your father? He meant well, to be sure; he always does. The point is, he said something—and it hurt—and she said something—and it didn't—and it's up to you, Ollie, to realize this and confide in her—before it's too late." But the boy would have hung his head, or shaken it. . . .

With respect to the example his parents set by never attending church themselves, one might have questioned: "Why were they so lax or lackadaisical?" Had one put this question to an older Ollie, a being beginning to look back in retrospect, he would have answered: "It must have been this way. Sunday was the busiest day of the week in the life of my parents. It was then that most other people were free and more customers came in than at any other time. They began coming in fairly early, and my mother, who was always up first, had to be sure to sweep the store—scrub it a bit, if necessary—and yet not confuse the needs of the store with the needs of the household: those *Pfannekuchen,* for example. In the midst of preparations in the rear, she was often interrupted by the bell out front—which meant that someone was in a passionate hurry for some Virgin Leaf or Honest Long Cut, a General Lee or a General Grant, Sweet Caporals or Lucky Strikes. Or for a penny box of matches—or a light—'begging your pardon, my pipe's gone out'—or—'would you change, if you please, this dollar bill—two halves or four quarters will do.' Only to be disturbed in turn by—'Is the coffee ready—has the Sunday paper come?' Such questions rattled on through breakfast, the rest of the morning, dinner, the rest of the afternoon, supper, the rest of the evening, up till closing-time, bedtime. If my mother had an occasion for her religion or faith or whatever it was she believed in, Sunday was scarcely the day for it—not for going out, that is, and seeking it in a church.

"As to what my father was doing meanwhile, this question is more disconcerting. Most of the time he was helping Mother in the store; but the rest of the time—well, he liked to read the Staats Zeitung, and find out if those *Lumpengesindel,* the Tammany Tigers, would carry New York again. Only to resign politics to politicians and turn to the chess column with: 'Hello—Lasker beat Steinitz—how could that happen—I must

play that game over—the store can wait—here, Ollie, come—set up the pieces—Steinitz must be growing old to lose to such a youngster. Still, when a man's been champion for twenty-five years, it's time for him to step down. What a move—is that right—read it again—are you sure? Is he crazy—his men are hemmed in—the old man plays like a duffer. Here—give me the paper—where are my glasses—*wo stecken die verfluchten Brillen schon wieder?'* (Which meant Ollie's mother had to find them again.) 'And what chess—did you ever see such caution—the one's afraid and the other doesn't dare—shades of Paul Morphy! He could have played those two blindfolded—any of the old players could have done it—Anderssen, Kieseritzky, Labourdonnais—even old Philidor—what's the world coming to anyhow—*pfui!'* And he would brush the chessmen aside, wipe off the board, and return to the store. Or if he didn't return. . . .

"You might have seen, even had you eyed him casually, that Father must have been an athlete in his youth. He had gone to the gymnasium in Germany, to the *Turn Verein* over here, and had had his period of strenuous military training. Had you watched his bearing, you would have seen why he had to have his Sunday constitutional—only to Central Park—'I'll be back soon.' Anyone who can recall the New York of those days will assure you there was very little green in the town. This was not so hard on one who had been born in the town; but on one who had been raised on a farm—like my father—and considering that, instead of trees, shrubs, flowers and grass, Third Avenue presented an endless vista of lamp-posts, pumps, ash-cans, refuse-barrels—not to mention a perpetual rumbling overhead and a turmoil underfoot—on such a man, the call of green, four or five blocks to the west, must have exercised a maddening charm. He could hardly be expected to spend the whole of a Sunday indoors—or to devote his hour of freedom to still another building—church or no

church. If he had time for his religion or faith or whatever it was kept him going, Sunday was frankly not the day for it. Had one put such a question to him, he would have replied as he replied to all metaphysical queries: *Dummheiten.* Or he might have compromised, in an effort to keep up with the times, by breaking into the German-American *patois* he had started to acquire: *Es ist no use dass mann talken tut.*

"Something kept him going, and something kept her going—though they had lost a good deal so far, were to lose a deal more, and were, finally, to lose each other. For want of a sharper epithet, one has to call it—something. This was never discussed in the household. Few real things were ever discussed. It was not alone that all four—father, mother, Carl, Ollie—were a reticent group. There was so little time for talk—or for talk without interruption. Moreover, each of the males lived his own life. And the woman helped them live it. There is hardly an exact definition or word for such a condition or circumstance. One might call it solitude, aspiration, dreams, individuality, loneliness—and still fall wide of the truth. . . ."

III

1667

The number of that particular cigar store accidentally came back a few nights ago, while I was absorbed in a pastime outside the intention of these pages. Deep in the lap of relaxation, many miles and years away from any consideration so unimportant as the address of a shop on Third Avenue, I was moving back and forth between London and Dublin, in and out of the court of Queen Anne—under the expert guidance of a novelist of the Victorian era, William Makepeace Thackeray. With brilliant eloquence, marred by temporary lapses into Victorian morality, the author of Vanity Fair was showing the "dear reader" a fascinating portrait of the "unhappiest man on earth" —Jonathan Swift. The reader, in this instance, was so intrigued by the art of the story and the magnificent misery of the sitter, and so irritated by the pretty pink and baby blue allusions to the ladies, Stella and Vanessa, that he overlooked the year of the Dean's birth entirely. After he laid the book aside, a certain persistent echo, composed of six redundant syllables, smote his ear delicately—1667, 1667. Suddenly, he responded, hello, consulted the beginning of the essay, found that 1667 was indeed the coincidence, laughed at the trivial conceits of his brain—and returned to his own narrative. . . .

The store—a single store—had but one show-window, small and cramped. If one mentions the perennial contents of the window, it is simply to demonstrate that Ollie's father had in mind what was known as an "artistic appeal." He never sold any of the objects displayed—not in that neighborhood—but they succeeded in attracting an occasional passerby, foreign to the regular clientele. The four meerschaum pipes, the pa-

tient group of amber cigarholders, the Egyptian narghile—like a snake twined round and round itself—these were examined but never sold. Nor did the stranger accost Ollie's father—tipping his chair against the Indian, with one eye on the Staats Zeitung and the other on the prospective customer—and inquire into the mysteries of the narghile or where the storekeeper had unearthed it. Nor did he ever come so close as to question the authenticity of the meerschaums—"that pipe with the grapes round its breast—and that with the nude figure of a woman—are they warranted genuine meerschaum?" No, the stranger would shift about, cough once or twice, and if he didn't move away—followed by the shopkeeper's scornful eye—would sneak into the store—followed by the shopkeeper's hospitable step—and, nine cases out of nine, ask for a clay pipe, a corn cob, an imitation briar. After the customer departed—with a friendly "Call again" in his ears—Ollie's father, a philosopher as well as a German, would assert: "That man is a jackass—but anyhow—trade is improving." No matter what the nature of his latest disappointment, trade was always improving. At the close of the day, Ollie's mother would count the contents of the till—a row of circular receptacles for pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, halves, and an oblong for bills—and enter the total in a small cash book. The sum did not always correspond with her husband's optimistic prophecies. But the little woman usually hid the news, unless the total towered unexpectedly. Then she would tell him; and he would crow: "What did I tell you?"

The counters in the store—if both could be designated counters—formed an L on which glass show-cases rested. The shorter counter had but one case, and in it reposed those cigars which only a few folk, veritable aristocrats, ever purchased: fifteen-cent straight, imported Havanas. Right across the top of this case—since one opened it so rarely—and well within reach of a high stool, the shopkeeper's favorite perch—the

chessboard lay. But let it be added in haste, only at night, when one of his friends came in for a five-cent cigar—and a little game. There was barely enough room between the stool and the counter for a small boy to squeeze in. But if one put a box under one's feet, the boy was tall enough silently to follow the moves.

At first, these moves were a mystery, a terrible puzzle, a haunting invitation. His father had refused to teach him the game. "It's not good for you—a boy who's always sitting by the fire—chess is bad for the health." So Ollie had to watch and calculate, with a concentrated stare that amused the customer, especially if the customer won—which he did whenever his opponent ventured an unsound sacrifice. Immediately to defend himself with the venerable dodge: "I had a won game before I made that mistake." The boy watched and wondered until he learned where the pieces stand before the battle begins, and was permitted to set up his father's men—much to the amusement of the customer, who would say: "Never mind, *Junge,* when you grow up, you'll be able to play—your father's right—you're much too young to learn now." But Ollie was not too young—not for chess.

He had already formed a pernicious habit—a lifelong habit—of teaching himself what he could not learn otherwise. At home, there had never been any conscious effort to direct the child, and at school this effort was chained to a machine-like curriculum in which he could take no joyous part. The ideals of the school may have been wholesome and practical as far as the average youngster was concerned, but Ollie did not fit in. He was docile enough and his deportment "good." He enjoyed spelling and arithmetic, perhaps because most sounds appealed to him. And he was always promoted. But almost anything outside the school interested him more. In this respect, no child could have been more "perverse." Nor did the streets and his playmates excite him as much as they should have.

He was undoubtedly what people call singular. Nothing but an abnormal entity—so it might have been inferred—would have stood up night after night, on an improvised pedestal, for the purpose of learning what those rooks, knights and bishops were doing. He never asked any questions; he was too shy, too self-centred for that. But continued to study and concentrate until he had mastered every turn of the moves. Ollie was nine years old at the time.

Thus began a habit, the outcome of which no one, least of all the boy himself, could have prognosticated. Chess undermined his energies for a while, and the arts which it led to crippled every potential activity of a reasonable character, handicapped him in the concern of earning the right to exist, and encouraged him in the wrong direction: the realm of the imagination. Pursuing the unpopular dictates of a world apart unfitted him for the daily affairs of the civilization in which he was to grow up, virtually ostracized him for some time to come, forced him to mingle with others of his kind—"wastrels, loafers, ne'er-do-wells." In a land "of the people, for the people, by the people," the individual was suspect, unless he happened to be one of themselves raised to the heights—the farm hand to President—the deck hand to admiral—the factory hand to head of the corporation.

None of these visions occurred to Ollie watching the rooks, knights and bishops. Nor did they occur to his father when he first caught him setting up the chessmen, each right piece on its right square, and trying out moves on the sly, to see if they worked. The father was so foolish as to be proud of the sight, as he lifted the boy to the throne and urged one of the customers to challenge him. "Give the boy odds—a queen and two rooks—and let's see what will happen." They saw him improve and promoted him from the queen and two rooks to a queen and one rook. ("What do you think of the rascal?") And then to a queen—the queen alone. ("How did he learn

so fast?—it was only a few months ago—") Yes, he had learned fairly fast. First of all, when he lost, he had taken to weeping hysterically—until his father gave the customer the wink, and the latter made a mistake, and Ollie won a piece and smiled, and his opponent cried, *"Potztausend,* what shall I do —he plays too well." Ollie tingled all over, found the checkmate—blundered into it—and felt like the King of Spain. Night after night he sat on the improvised throne, worked with all the small faculties at his command, silently, stubbornly, until the customer had made enough calculated blunders and Ollie enough uncalculated good moves for the former to cry, *"Potztausend,"* the boy to smile and feel warm, his father to exclaim with delight—and his mother to call: "Come, Ollie—go to bed—it's late—and you haven't studied your lessons."

The lessons were studied in the morning—hateful, teasing sums, verbs to be conjugated, penmanship to be perfected, in a monotonous blank book—at breakfast, or before, or after—"Hurry, Ollie, it's time to go to school." Books he had to strap together—stupid streets he had to walk—dull homes he had to pass—crawling along alone—and trying to catch up with something just ahead—something he didn't want to catch up with—which the warning school bell called him to—"if you don't learn your lessons. . . ."

Ollie rounded a corner. He saw an ogre ahead—a familiar ogre squatting there. A loud, heart-chilling clang burst upon him. It was the second warning bell. Another bell and he would be late. He trembled all over. His knees threatened to give way. Oh, for the courage to turn his back and run away! He saw five or six stragglers going at top speed. They were not running away from the ogre, but toward it. Pretty soon, it swallowed them all. Ollie started in the same direction. Then he broke into a trot, and into a violent pace. Just as he passed into the dreaded mouth and hurried down the terrible gullet, the late bell rang. He was just in time. He was still

"a good boy." But the bell had sounded sardonic. And his hastening footsteps, on the stone stairway leading to his classroom, mocked him with echoes. Soon after he slid into his seat, the roll-call began. Smart tongues emerged from smart-looking, neatly washed, carefully combed faces. And as his name was called, Ollie answered like the rest—"Present early." His name had to be called once more. His response had not been loud enough. So he said again—loud enough for Miss Goldsmith to hear—"Present early." And the teacher responded, "That's better," and went on to the next alphabetical boy. . . .

IV

A ZITHER AND A MANDOLIN

MEANWHILE, Carl, the older brother, was also going his way. The *Schlangankel* of the family—already taller than his father—spent his days downtown in an architect's office, and several nights a week studying drawing in Cooper Union. On the whole, he managed to help his parents quite a bit by bringing home his pay-envelope. Today, Carl is six feet three (with a large family of his own); in those days, he was fully six feet. Seven years older and decidedly taller than his brother, he had little in common and little to do with Ollie. Now and then he teased and plagued the boy in exchange (he duly confessed) for the days he had had to wheel the baby about and listen to his "everlasting bawling." Carl could hardly be the playmate for Ollie; nor a companion sufficiently sympathetic to make "the kid" feel less lonely. Furthermore, Ollie was in constant dread of the *Schlangankel;* held him in step-ladder awe; and, except for one accomplishment Carl had on the side—playing the zither—didn't understand or try to understand him. Nor did Carl understand Ollie, with his absurd absorption in chess—which the older brother had never taken the trouble to learn.

Ollie, who liked all things with an appeal to the ear, enjoyed Carl's zither. On this old-fashioned, harp-toned instrument, his brother strummed antiquated airs, with many a pleasant glissando and harmonic in the solo over the deep-bellied, dulcet thrumming of the accompaniment. Swiss mountain airs, with a deal of yodelling from peak to peak, Austrian *Ländler,* German folk songs—these tickled Ollie into a pleasant drowsiness. But the other things—popular American tunes of the day—the

boy, for some reason or other, didn't fancy in the least: After The Ball, Rosie O'Grady, The Sidewalks Of New York and

"Sullivan and Corbett had a fight,
Sullivan swung with all his might."

Though he didn't say so, these tunes irritated Ollie. Though he didn't know it, he felt superior to them, and superior to his brother for playing them with so much gusto. It might have been supposed the boy was a little snob for not liking them. Or a premature little old man, hypersensitive and oversqueamish about some of the expressions of his native city, and not sufficiently democratic or tolerant about them. Carl himself would have said: "Oh—he's only a kid—just a funny kid—you'll get used to him." Carl carried himself like a man of the world—and resembled such a being more than his father did. Perhaps, therefore, the reference to his lack of comprehension of Ollie ought to be revised.

As a matter of fact, on an occasion when Ollie had to be kept at home—slender though he was, he was never ill beyond a cold or a headache—one of Carl's friends, Lou Volland, brought an instrument to occupy and console the boy: a well-worn, somewhat "busted" mandolin. Ollie was enraptured with the thing. He had learned his scales at school—his do-re-mi-fa-sols—and by a process of measuring the frets mathematically and comparing the sounds he made, through pressing a finger and plucking a string, with the sounds he had learned in the classroom, he soon memorized a few primary scales on the instrument. And he had a mandolin manual to assist him with further rudiments. But he didn't employ the book long. He hated text-books. Like his brother, he preferred to play by ear. It was easier; came more naturally; and, as usual, Ollie was "perverse." The guide-book, for example, advised him to use his pinkie when it came to squeezing out high notes.

But the appendage was rather weak, or too small, or childishly temperamental. It refused to work and he humored it. So much so that later on, when the mandolin developed into an instrument called the mandolute, the self-same pinkie, though stouter and stronger, still refused to work—and it is useless and lazy and temperamental right down to this day.

In those days, after Ollie had taught himself the rudiments, he picked out a few simple tunes and memorized them. He might forget—and usually did forget—the things he was taught at school, but with tunes he had no trouble at all. The original melodies quickly expanded to a small repertoire his memory clung to until he wearied of this or that composition. This he would drop from the repertoire and add something new that appealed to him. Some of the early tunes were among those Carl played and Ollie fancied, and these he would learn sufficiently well to play with Carl, the younger brother taking the solo and the older supplying the accompaniment—*Kommt Ein Vogel Geflogen* and *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* and *Du, Du, Liegst Mir Am Herzen.* Whenever the brothers played together, their mother listened, while darning socks, and their father, while smoking his evening cigar. Ollie was eleven or twelve at the time.

These gatherings took place in the dining-room. It was an unpretentious affair, with a round, oil-clothed table, four chairs, a rocker and one or two minor accessories. The room had no window. The gatherings—whenever they were uninterrupted by the store-bell—were remarkable for their unconscious serenity. Every corner was saturated with an exquisite carelessness, a well-earned leisure, a detached, go-as-you-please harmony. Notwithstanding that Carl and Ollie soon disagreed —Carl, by attempting some new tune he had heard—The Fisher's Hornpipe or Arra Go On, You're Only Foolin'—or Ollie, by undertaking the interminable strains of the Intermezzo from Cavalleria—all the way from the bottom of the yearning

within him to the highest frets of the E string—notwithstanding such breaks, the evenings were serene. The father preferred Carl's tunes. They were gayer—some of them reminded him of his youth—sounds he would nod to thoughtfully. The mother preferred Ollie's tunes. They were sadder, more plaintive—brought back echoes of days before her marriage—when Hermann came and courted her—took her to the theatre—and, now and then, to the opera. Outside the chess alliance, this division obtained throughout: Carl and his father, Ollie and his mother. Carl and his father made much more noise, Ollie and his mother more silence. The former were more volatile and cheerful; the latter had much less to say—even to each other.

In the matter of pinochle—which the family indulged in when the instruments were quiet and the chessboard in hiding—Carl and his father invariably opposed Ollie and his mother and boldly captured game after game. If Ollie could stand the strain no longer and theatened to quit, a hoax was perpetrated. The next time the store-bell rang, his father would say: "There's a customer, Ollie—see what he wants." Ollie would demur and grumble until his mother rose—usually a ruse—and the boy, ashamed to see her go, would attend to the customer. When he returned, he would find a new round had been dealt. No, he would play no more—not until he had been cajoled and petted into just one more hand—"such luck can't last forever." He would take up his cards with a scowl—and no one would say a word or dare to look at him. Suddenly, Carl would say, Humph, looking at his own hand, and his father, *Donnerwetter,* looking at his. And the partners would gravely and gloomily lay out and meld between them a paltry twenty spades and twenty clubs—the while Ollie was still busy tremblingly arranging his cards—and seeing so many aces, would be attacked by prickly heat, and beholding so many trumps, would feel a whole furnace rise. When his mother had

to ask—"What's the matter—have you nothing at all to meld this time?" Ollie would grin sheepishly and then, furtively, so as not to betray his joy too fast, spread out his hundred aces and hundred and fifty trumps, not to mention eighty kings and two dieces—much to the loud-voiced amazement and consternation of the enemy. And the boy, without the aid of his partner, would take in so many tricks, as well, that the enemy exploded—*"Gott in Himmel"*—"Jerusalem"—*"Heilige Maria"*—"Holy Smoke!"

The room had no window, but a cheery, yellow lamp, reposing on the table, gave them all the light they required. Eventually, the father tired of pinochle. "Pinochle is dumb—get out the chessboard, Ollie." The boy would go after the board with alacrity: he was no longer a beginner. Carl would stretch his long legs and say: "I'm going out"—and nobody demanded where, since he was a wage-earner and a man. He would leave quietly, help himself to a good cigar—"Carl's own brand," as his father proudly called it—and join Lou Volland, Adolph Dietzel and Gus Fruehling—all of whom likewise played zithers and had founded a quartet, of which Gus was the leader. The mother would continue her sewing until the store-bell rang. If old Hirschfeld came in—with his considerate hesitancy—she would smile a friendly greeting and say: "They're in the rear, playing"—and old Hirschfeld would bring his considerate hesitancy into the dining-room.

"I hope I'm not disturbing?——"

"Not at all, not at all——"

"But are you sure?——"

"Don't talk so much, sit down."

And he would sit down behind Ollie.

If old Eichendorf, or Kalinski, or Ziegenschwarz, came in, she would tell them the same. But Eichendorf, Kalinski, Ziegenschwarz and the rest would always wait for those two in the rear, or one of those two, to come out to the front

counter and bring the chessboard along. Old Hirschfeld alone enjoyed the privilege of penetrating the sanctum. He was popular in the family because he never played, was an expert *Kibitz* or onlooker and maintained an air of enthusiastic detachment, no matter what happened on the battlefield—with an almost imperceptible predilection in Ollie's direction whenever the boy made what looked like a good move. (With regard to such moves, Frank Marshall, the present American champion, once advised Ollie to beware of patriarchs who nod with every move you make—"If they do, you can be sure you're playing like a duffer.") Be that as it may, old Hirschfeld nodded behind Ollie fairly constantly, and added to it by stuttering and stammering the most extravagant praise.

He couldn't resist stuttering and stammering. It was his profession, and he had cured so many people through so many years of just these impediments, and was so obsessed with sympathy for their suffering, that he had caught the affliction himself. One can still hear him declare, slowly, patiently, courteously: "It is very simple. You speak before you think. Now, if instead, you would think before you speak, you will cure yourself. Now—follow me—carefully—one word at a time." And the patient would read aloud from an elementary book—a fable of Æsop's—something with words of one syllable. "There is nothing really wrong with you—nothing physical—not your larynx—or tongue—or palate. You have what we scientists call an impediment of speech—that's all." Ollie's father suffered with it too—but only when his friend was around, and they were engaged in an energetic debate.

Ollie silently adored old Hirschfeld. If his father began, "What do you think the boy has done now?"—old Hirschfeld, without waiting for the rest, would retort gently: "Never mind —wait—he's only a boy—don't forget that—but wait—" and Ollie would stare at the old man, and without being able to

fathom the significance of these portentous "waits" and "but waits"—thanked him with his eyes.

At the family councils, infrequent though they were and such as they were, the person who was usually consulted, even ahead of Aunt Isabelle, Uncle Otto, Aunt Emma, Uncle Henry, was likely to be the doctor of stutterers and stammerers. Old Hirschfeld and Ollie's father fell into many an argument, rising to the heights of a dispute, and uncomplimentary epithets were liable to shoot back and forth:

"Yes—but that's because you're a Jew——"

"Yes—and because you're a Catholic."

They always reached a jovial settlement; each, of course, still justifying himself in his original contention, but admitting, with sundry lenient corollaries, that the other was not far wrong after all and——

"Come in again tomorrow—Hirschfeld——"

"I will—Hermann—I will."

And he would—with his spectacles blinking on ahead and his voice announcing cheerfully: *"Guten Abend, meine Herrschaften—sonst geht's gut?"* Without waiting for an answer, he would repeat a category of courteous inquiries as to *die Mutter, der Vater, Carl*—and last and most important of all, Ollie—"who will yet grow up—mark my words—and fool us." He would put on his green shade to protect his eyes from the light of the lamp, clear his throat, sit down behind Ollie and watch the boy play his father, and often defeat him without the aid of a handicap or any manufactured errors.

Ollie couldn't see the eyes of old Hirschfeld—nor the round-rimmed windows that helped their vision. He was always bent over the table, his shoulders thrust forward, his chest cramped and his elbows planted in front of him. The boy had grown a little near-sighted, physically as well as mentally, from reading too many books at times he should have been studying school books: Henty, Frank Merriwell, Dumas, Mark Twain,

and other exciting adventurers. And from cramming down books on chess, Gossip, Staunton, Steinitz; committing to memory all the variations of all the openings he could possibly store away; and middle-game tactics and end-game theories and the games upon games of the masters. And from reading in a bad light, or a half light, or no light whatsoever. But there were many things Ollie could hear that escaped most people. He loved to follow the inflections, hints and overtones of that stuttering and stammering. Dreamy, slow and absent-minded though he was, he had playmates of a sort, but no one of them meant to him what old Hirschfeld did.

"Ha—Hermann—he's got you there——"

"*Dummheit*——"

"Wait and see——"

"*Blötzin*——"

"Then what are you going to do?——"

"Don't talk so much——"

"You'd better resign before he mates you——"

"How can I think while you *quatsch* and *quatsch?*"

Old Hirschfeld would leave him alone. Perhaps, he would hear Ollie's mother come in. He would look up at her—with that silent respect he always gave her—and nod at her—meaning Ollie. And she—with no knowledge of chess or anything else so mysterious—would nod back. Ollie would see neither the one nor the other nod—not just then—but wait for his father to move. Or to shove the pieces aside with a deprecating gesture.

"I shouldn't have made that sacrifice. It was unsound. But I had a won game—you must admit, Hirschfeld——"

But his friend wouldn't admit it. Another debate would ensue. Ollie's mother would return to the store. And the boy would set up his pieces again to the accompaniment of——

"You old Jew——"

"You old Catholic——"

"What do you know anyhow?——"
"Who ever—t-taught you—anything?——"
"Why don't you—th-think—before you sp-peak?——"
"I d-don't have to th-think—with you——"
"Go home to bed—g-go to sleep——"
"You had a lost game—from the st-start——"
"What do you know about chess—you *Nebich*——"
"What do you know—you *Potzer*——"

And so on—until Ollie had to set up his father's men, as well. And his father, seeing he had the white pieces this time, would desist, seize the king's pawn, shove it forward two challenging squares and cry impetuously: "Come on—let's have a gambit now—and I'll show you both." Like Paul Morphy before him.

But Ollie would decline the gambit—like Steinitz or Lasker of the present day—by cautiously pushing his king's pawn one little square and preparing a tight-fitting, solidly protected defence—a French Defence, as it's called. There would be no holding his father then. A passion of words would fall—before which even old Hirschfeld had to give way—and the clattering, irate conclusion: *Noch so alt und doch so dumm.* The climax was inevitable—and unavailing. Ollie was eleven or twelve—his father fifty-four or fifty-five. There was no reconciling them. Old Hirschfeld would shake his head and wait for the silence to return. Or go out and join Ollie's mother. And talk things over with her. . . .

V

THE KITCHEN STOVE

About ten o'clock, Ollie having neglected his lessons once more and, thanks to the excitement of the evening, his head beginning to droop and his face to turn spectral with exhaustion, a voice would say: "Come to bed now." Not "go to bed," but "come to bed," as if he were still a few years old. He would say "good-night" to old Hirschfeld, receive an encouraging pat on the head, and follow his mother down a short, narrow passageway into the nearer of the two bedrooms. If he were too sleepy to hold his body upright, his mother would help him a trifle in the matter of undressing: the shoes being farthest away from his hands and more complicated than the rest of his clothes, she would stoop down and unbutton them—a delicious sensation to one so weary—and say, "There now." This expression also helped somewhat; and while his mother pulled back the blankets of the double bed and poked the pillows in a way that created not a sound, Ollie would emerge from the rest of his clothes somehow, except for an occasional struggle with the bow tie, the clip of which refused to detach itself from the collar button at his throat and had to be released by the gently adept fingers of the little woman.

Fatigued though he was, Ollie could not go to sleep at once. He was usually nervous at night. Things which had happened at the chesstable or somebody he had met in a book pestered him. The Three Musketeers would revert to some mad grotesquerie or Ollie greeted visions of himself as a huge Monte Cristo, looming ten feet tall on an island in the sea and crying, "The world is mine," with such a terrible tone and grimace

that people fled before him, led by Miss Goldsmith and the other teachers at school—old Peabody, the principal, outdistancing the lot. Or he would behold ogres and hobgoblins who caused him to toss from side to side, until he bumped against somebody, sitting on the edge of the bed, and clutched her apron trustingly. This would send him to sleep.

The room was rather stuffy. It had a window, but the window opened on an air-shaft down which very little air squeezed itself. There were so many of these air-shafts in town, and so many people all the way to the bottom of them who had to be supplied with air, one might have supposed there was hardly enough oxygen to make the rounds. If one stood on the roof of 1667 and leaned over and peered down the dark hole, scarcely the width of a chasm, the air coming up from below, one might have said, would have smothered any air coming down from above. And one might have done something about it Lying in bed, Ollie never thought of this and consequently did nothing about it; but it played a part in his education, or development, or whatever one chooses to call the factors affecting the process of growing up. The room was sufficiently stuffy to influence his life in the dark; to waken him, make him feel queer, cause him to see or imagine things that affected him. Luckily, when he woke, he felt another body there, right in the bed itself; the long-legged frame of a *Schlangankel.* This would quiet and send him to sleep again. But even in sleep, other queer things would manifest themselves; familiar things distorted, chasing him down endless streets, driving him into the East River at one end or the Hudson at the other. Eerie voices would call: One foot off, one foot on; and he clung to the sidewalk with all his strength; till the voices called: Two feet off, both feet off. Then he let loose and ran for dear life, plunged into one of the rivers, started to drown, only to be caught by the enemy and led in disgrace to the end of a long line of prisoners, his own allies

captured before him, forming a hand-to-hand chain, reaching out for his hand, nearer and nearer—until he woke up, sighed with relief and moved closer to his brother. . . .

The morning came, not when the sun awoke, but when his mother awoke. With her apron about her once more, she would come from the other bedroom and shake Carl gently, until he grumbled, "All right—all right." She would shake Ollie too—but not on Saturday or Sunday, the blessed days he didn't have to go to school. Then she would return to the other bedroom, call "Hermann," and go into the kitchen and start the stove that kept them all alive. And start the coffee and the toast, and set the kitchen table where they took their breakfast, one by one as a rule. She would not, of course, neglect to unlock the door of the store. Other people got up so early, a man might be ringing any moment. This would give her another opportunity to shake the boys if necessary, with an additional, "You'll be late for work, Carl"—"You haven't done your lessons, Ollie." There was a tight little alcove as well, where the family washed away the night. This was the most hateful corner in the apartment; that is to say, Ollie loathed it. He was not like Vachel Lindsay's kitten, that even "washed behind the ears." Cold water jarred one from head to heel, a daily doom one had to go through with, sooner or later. But he delayed the performance as long as he could.

Just as soon as he could manage it, he hurried into the kitchen, and went, straight as a cat, to the big-bellied, jovial stove. Above all things and persons in the house, Ollie hugged the stove. He always felt thin and miserable in the early morning. At times, the contact threatened to scorch him. So he learned to compromise with the stove, whose name anyone who cared to could read on the door of the oven: Lucille. No one could prod him away from Lucille; not even his father who, never a mystic in the morning, would cry: "What's this—

hanging over the fire again? *Schafskopf!* Will you never learn that isn't good for you?"

"Leave him be——" Ollie's mother interposed.

"No wonder he always looks so pale——"

"Sit down to your breakfast——"

"Dummkopf!"

This was not the hour for a lengthy controversy. Ollie's father had to sit down and ease his temper by grumbling at the table. He was due in the factory by nine—where he still filled the situation Katie Miller had described: a *segar-packer*. The store itself did not earn an income commensurate with the family expenses, not even with Carl's added stipend. The rent of the store and apartment and the cost of running both —food, light, heat, clothing, etc.—exceeded what the till took in and Carl brought home. In other words, one had to have enough on hand to satisfy the other storekeepers, friendly though they were, and keep enough pots or pans steaming or sizzling with varied ingredients. And one had to attend to Mr. Callahan, the landlord, friendly though he was, especially when he came in on the first of the month and ordered a fifteen-cent cigar, with a cheerfully expectant, "How are things, mam?"

Ollie's mother constantly gave him a short, optimistic report, clearly not a shrewd policy. If she had any troubles, no one ever heard them—least of all Mr. Callahan. One had to ferret them out somehow or ask the "old man." Meanwhile, Mr. Callahan's greeting expressed a preliminary regret calling for a boomerang concerning his own affairs. And no one on the block could relieve one's feelings "like that cigar-store woman." He was garrulous and affable in letting them loose, not to say confidential. "The way my taxes go mounting 's a caution. The way City Hall keeps tearing the hair from my head—the Building Department, the Water Works, the Gas Inspection, the Plumbing Bureau, the Board of Health—there are more departments than people running them, and they a lot of ver-

min and leeches. You ought to bless your stars, mam, you don't own the house you live in!"

"The cigar-store woman" would sympathize with him. "Things are never so bad, they mightn't be worse," she would repeat, as he accepted the sealed envelope she held out to him and lifted his hat—a courtly manœuvre he manipulated when he came in and when he went out. Ollie's father, fuming away in the rear and listening to the landlord mounting the stairs to the floors above, would explode: "The dirty loafer! Why do you listen to his lies? If you opened your mouth once in a while, instead of treating him like an emperor—wait—I'll tell him some day. He's like all the Irish; they not only run Tammany Hall, the *Räuberbande,* but everything else in sight; there's not a house they haven't laid hands on. *Pfui!*"

But he never told him some day. Instead, Ollie's father continued to go out before nine and return after six—industriously packing Seidenberg's cigars. And packing Seidenberg's cigars was one of the best of his accomplishments. Although he wore spectacles on his eagle's nose, and had been doing so for years, no other packer, no matter how young his eyes, could compete with Ollie's father. The "old man" was proud of his achievement, advertised it, gave eager demonstrations in the store. "Look at that box there. Isn't it awful? The fellow who packed it must have been blind or an idiot. Now look at this one, one of Seidenberg's—can you tell me who packed this one?"

The customer would examine the row of bullet-like panatellas —colorado, colorado maduro or maduro—and under the packer's guidance, follow the lighter wrappers at one end, very gradually, almost imperceptibly, shifting to the slightly darker at the other in an uninterrupted chromatic scale of tones. The man would hastily retort: "Of course, I know—there's only one artist in town could have done it." Ollie's father would lay the box back in the show-case, Seidenberg's Best, give it an

affectionate look, and then forget to sell the customer whatever it was he had called for. Until the latter was forced, after a diplomatic pause, to repeat his request.

After Ollie's father left for the factory, Carl for the architect's office and Ollie—but let us hope it is Saturday—so he doesn't have to go to school, and can stay at home with no one about but his mother—and the stove. And the double window in the rear is full of, or nearly full of, sunlight. And the back yard is fairly silent. So that he may read in peace, or read aloud in peace. Or try a new melody, and play that aloud without fear of interruption, unless his mother should ask, "What's that?" and he reply bashfully, "The Miserere," and she apologize, "Of course." Or drag out his toy theatre, the outfit she had bought at his request, on his last birthday, with the paper puppets that ran along grooves if you pulled the right string. Robinson Crusoe, and Friday, and the ships: a small one for the illusion of distance, a large one for the illusion of coming closer and landing. And a pamphlet, a libretto, to be read aloud while you pulled the strings, the right voice for the right character. And a string to pull the curtain, open it or close it, so that the audience (his mother, if she had time, or Emma and Laura, when they were present) would know when the play began, keep as still as mice, and know when it stopped; and, waiting for Ollie to come from behind the theatre, would tell him how wonderful the play was: how like life, like Crusoe, Friday, the sea, the island, and the rest.

If his mother wasn't busy in the store, but only in the kitchen, washing and drying the dishes or sewing, she was by far the best audience. Never said the wrong thing, like Emma, his neighbor who, after all, was still much too young, or Laura, her grown-up sister, who couldn't resist teasing him a little. About that splinter Crusoe got caught in, so that Ollie had to interrupt the play, bring his own hand right into view, lift Crusoe and set him beyond the splinter, only to have Laura

ask, as he might have known she would ask: "Was that white thing that came from above an angel of deliverance?" Laura always frightened him, hurt his feelings, made him see how small he was and how motherly she could be, as if he, as well as Emma, needed coddling. First she would scare him so and then limp toward him, with that beautiful grace her lameness gave her, and act as though he was the one who was lame, and had to have his arm stroked, and had to listen to: "There, Ollie, I was only fooling, the play was wonderful, dear—wasn't it, Emma?" And Emma would gush all over the place. They really didn't understand, much as they tried to.

Neither did his mother understand altogether, but she didn't say things, either too much or too little, to prove that she didn't. If she had time or could make time, she would sit there, not a day older or younger than himself, and follow what he was doing, nearly, pretty nearly, as he himself would have followed it had he been the audience and she the puppeteer. On a Saturday morning, when the dishes were clear, and the backyard children hadn't begun, and the store-bell was silent, and the only sound in the kitchen was the occasional chuckling of the stove, and the only face at the windows, the face, or part of the face of the sun, and his mother sat in a chair at the other long end of the table, so still that the chair never creaked, and Ollie sat at his end, with his legs under the table, and the rest of him hidden from view behind the theatre, the book of the play under his elbows, and one of the magic strings in his hand, waiting for him to tug it and start the curtain slowly rolling to the top, and not even the latest stray kitten he had gathered from the streets disturbed them, but lay curled under Lucille, with the milk of the morning or the bones of last night inside him, and fell asleep without purring. . . .

VI

PLAYMATES AND GROWN-UPS

Before the advent of the chessmen, the pinochle deck, the mandolin, the books, the puppet theatre, Ollie might have been found down in the backyard below or out on the sidewalk in front of 1667. He was not so "peculiar" that outdoor games had not had their day with him: prisoner's base, red rover, marbles, craps; and those shameful games one played with girls: jacks, bean-bag and house, the last being reserved for Emma alone. Most of all, because he loved it most of all, he played ball. Not football, that had to be played in cold weather and for which he was never tough enough, but baseball, that came in the spring and summer and for which he was not too light.

Like many another youngster then, he painted himself in the rôle of a pitcher like Amos Rusie of the New York Giants, whom his brother had taken him to see in a battle against Willie Hutchinson of the Chicago Cubs, one afternoon in the bleachers—was it thirty years ago? The tremendous Amos was to his generation what the tremendous Babe Ruth is to his; except that the former inspired every boy to be a pitcher and strike out three batters an inning, while the latter moves him to take a swipe at the ball and knock it out of the lot. Ollie had developed something resembling an outcurve, but it always broke long before reaching the batter, who rarely encountered much difficulty in leaning his bat against what was left of it. Ollie's shoulders weren't broad enough to put much behind the ball, nor his wrists and forearm supple enough to put much on it. The captain of the Eagles, Larry Sanders, therefore relegated him to the infield and delegated himself

pitcher—not so much a feat of diplomacy as it was the custom of the land for the pitcher to be captain and the captain pitcher. At the plate, Ollie was no clouter or slugger, but he could pick out the good ones and let the bad ones go by, unless the latter happened to be high, in which event he would launch his bat like a parabola and drop the ball over the heads of the infielders for an impeccable "Texas Leaguer." Furthermore, he always brought his "bean" with him and was given the sobriquet "Old Fox," after little Willie Keeler of the Baltimore Orioles. Ollie used this head of his for purposes of strategy; fooling the infielders by placing the hits he made or dropping a measly bunt, too near for the pitcher, too far for the catcher, and running to first like a rabbit pursued by Christendom. And he had no trouble stealing second and little trouble stealing third, but this was no disgrace to the opposing catcher because, in those days, he didn't wear a mask and had to catch the pitcher's delivery on the bounce. If he caught it, nobody expected him to shoot the ball all the way to second, a whole mile at least, and if he shot it to third, the chances were even that the ball would hit the dirt and crack the infielder's shins or leap over his head and roll merrily on, with the breathless, excited Ollie scurrying home. In the field, though Ollie was rather small, Captain Sanders let him play first base, because he could jump high enough to spear a wild throw and had enough rubber in his legs to straddle for the wide ones or stoop for a fancy pick-up, just like Fred Tenney of the Boston Beaneaters.

In general, Ollie was hardly destined for the big leagues; neither were his playmates. The New York boy had none of the natural advantages enjoyed by a country boy. He had little play room off the streets and gutters and backyards, and this was confined to the lots, of which there were still quite a few in town, including the one across from the school on Ninety-sixth Street, a lot spacious enough to admit a miniature

diamond and part of an outfield. The infield had no grass on it; but there were no trees to obstruct the outfielders—as it often happens in the country. Only the infielders suffered genuinely. The question of gathering grounders was invariably disturbed when the pesky sphere grazed a stone, bounced over one's outstretched hands and landed on one's eye, nose or finger-tip. Then one had to be led to a pump by one's cronies, a battle-scarred hero and the envy of them all, but not very happy as one was sent or led home, a distinguished figure in the world, but a villain as soon as one passed a well-known door-step. . . .

After he entered high school, at fourteen, wearing glasses, Ollie had to give up active baseball. But what posterity lost in a famous first-baseman, Hal Chase provided instead. And it gained this dubious consolation: a truly inveterate, an infamous fan. . . .

Down in Ollie's backyard, there were no trees either, no trace of grass or of green and not much of a sky, as skies go. But a wooden stoop with an iron banister and a cement pavement squared off by a high fence sufficed as a background for the songs, dances and games the youngsters indulged in. There was nothing unusual about any of these But they were exhilarating just as long as one didn't weary of them—precisely what Ollie did. One couldn't be a kid forever. He even wearied of being the beautiful hero of an improvised drama, or the odious villain: Steve Brodie, the first to jump off Brooklyn Bridge, four or five steps from the top of the stoop to the bottom; or Jack the Ripper, knifing sundry fleeing women and children with a murderous clothespin that had dropped from one of the clothes-lines, stretching overhead to the house across the way. It was a house like all the houses in the row over there—a house like all the houses in the row over here. After one had sung, danced and played those games in rotation, there was not a single variation to break the monot-

ony. It was different indoors, as Ollie grew older and the older things came. One only had to dig out the board and men, or the cozy mandolin with its oval belly, or the theatre, the real theatre. Or sit down with a flesh-and-blood grown-up, away from those infants pretending they were this and that, when anyone could see, especially anyone growing up, that they weren't men and women—with their make-believe house—their "Johnny, run to the grocer and fetch Mother a loaf of bread—Father's coming home and he's hungry!"

Somehow or other, real grown-ups had spoiled Ollie. Enough of them—without, of course, "understanding" him, as he would have called it—humored a sufficient number of the conceits possessing him to divert him from boys of his own age, with the exception, always, of those who were or might be akin to him. Virtually all of these didn't enter his life until later. At eleven or twelve, and more so at thirteen and fourteen, Ollie, whenever he craved society at all, definitely sought people quite a little older than himself. And among them, his mother and old Hirschfeld, his father at chess-time, and Laura, were merely a few of those who drew him away from his mother and old Hirschfeld, his father at chess-time, and aunts and uncles among his many relatives who took a vigorous share in educating or influencing him, at the head of whom, high above the rest, stood, or rather sat, Aunt Isabelle.

The boy's mother had an unmarried sister who looked after two unmarried brothers in a flat on Second Avenue; in the front window of which, before he disappeared for good, Ollie used to see his eighty-year-old grandfather sitting like a genial Buddha and eyeing what remained of the world, the while he puffed a long, long pipe—a silent figure so much like Ollie's mother that the resemblance was uncanny. In that flat, Aunt Isabelle watched over Uncle Otto and Uncle Edward; the former because he had absent-minded tendencies and spent all of his evenings and Sundays in the society of mysterious books,

and the latter because his mind was, as they say, "touched"; and you never could tell what he might or might not do next. Edward Nascher was not dangerous; on the contrary, he was as gentle and harmless as the rest of the Naschers. But he had a queer way of lolling in a chair, letting his eyes roam about from floor to ceiling and side to side and of smiling abstractedly—which meant he was thinking of the races and what horse he ought to bet on tomorrow. One should also mention Aunt Emma, another gentle Nascher, who did so much better than the rest materially by marrying Uncle Henry, in Newark, New Jersey, where they lived in the whole of a brownstone house right on Broad Street, and had six children, none of whom ever died, three girls and three boys, Emily, Lena and Flossie, Henry, Wilbur and Arthur. Arthur was the favorite cousin from whom Ollie inherited an occasional suit of clothes, and with whom he could talk books, music and chess whenever they met. Arthur was almost his twin in looks, age and character, but, like his older brothers, eventually turned into a lawyer and a pillar of the town. And one ought to speak of his father's relatives—his sister, the huge, jolly, Rabelaisian Aunt Emilia, who had married an Italian baritone—Uncle Ruggiero, or as he was better known, Uncle Buongiorno—brother of a bishop in Milan. And his father's nephews and nieces—most of them were Schneiders—and among them, Uncle Franz, who glorified the cigar Indian. And the Roelkers, one of whom wrote short stories and advanced to the editorship of a magazine, from which post, later on, he rejected one of his cousin's stories and gave him a lot of sound advice, a courtesy Ollie recklessly neglected to follow. . .

But the one who influenced Ollie most was Aunt Isabelle. It was she who played on an antique square piano, usually out of tune, with two or three speechless keys and one or two creaking pedals. On this she introduced him to Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, by playing some of their sonatas, with much

more passion than accuracy, the while she told him what, especially, he ought to listen for: the main theme and the second theme, and if he'd bear these in mind, he'd be able to follow the development, and the part they call the recapitulation, and finally the part they call the coda. He had never really heard a piano before and what it could do. His mother had practised in her youth, and the only piece left to her fingers was the *Butterbrod Walzer,* famous for the marvellous glissando with which it closed, obviously descriptive of the running butter gliding across the bread. The piano at school one only heard in the morning, at assembly, when the music teacher played the Star-Spangled Banner, which no childish throat could repeat, or My Country, 'Tis of Thee, and The Red, White and Blue, both of which, notwithstanding the many three cheers in the latter, grew rather doleful in their daily round.

Aunt Isabelle swayed him further by demanding what he might be reading now; and after critically approving, advised him concerning books he hadn't read that he ought to read fairly soon, books Uncle Otto, the hermit, had recommended. Most of these were over the boy's head at the time—but he was destined to read them after Uncle Otto died and bequeathed a fourth of his library to Ollie: two to three hundred volumes, including Plutarch, Gibbon and Grote; Dickens, Scott and Thackeray; Darwin, Spencer and Huxley. He didn't read them all—certainly not the last trio—not with a head like his, never much use in science, outside of mathematics and chess. And he didn't read them all because a time came when he had to sacrifice the lot for some ready money, and let a second-hand dealer cart them off.

Another feature of his favorite aunt, her critical integrity, held the whole family in awe; even Ollie's father respected her. Fundamentally, she was the one direct element in a group of self-centred, impractical people; she had to be ever ready with short cuts to reality, no matter how dense the shilly-shally

romanticism she was forced to penetrate. Nature had given her a quick, ironic tongue in the service of an astonishing fund of common sense. Despite her devotion to music, books, art and things called ideals, she never dropped into rhetoric. Her speech was plain and monosyllabic. It was Ollie's mother she used to visit most often. While the women sat together, gossiping about the family, Ollie would appear. And he would be asked to play "that new piece you've just learned," or to read aloud whatever it was he was up to now. While his mother listened in silence, patiently waiting for her youngest sister to say what she thought, the latter would lower her head and wait for the right words to shape themselves. Some of them hurt the boy when they came, but there was something in the air that made him feel grown-up, and eventually the hurt had a way of healing and helping him.

Now and then, the critic would bring a new score for him to master. She would first hold it close to her eyes. Being a maiden aunt and still a bit vain, she never wore glasses. She would raise and lower the score or move it from side to side, her nose almost touching the paper, and say: "No, this isn't too hard. You can learn to play it. But don't hurry, take your time. It's the first of the Mozart sonatas. Don't bother about the bass. That's meant for the piano. Just try the treble, the solo. That's where the melodies lie. They're beautiful." Or she would bring some special volume, with garlands, flowers and things like that on the cover, and, probably because he couldn't get the drift of such stuff in those days, possibly because they made him memorize too much of it at school, she would read some of it aloud, give him a dip to start with. But he hated a good deal of it privately, even though she said: "Now—that was by Keats, an English poet who died in his early twenties. Maybe you'll like Shelley better, or Byron, but I think you'd better begin with Keats—he ought to appeal to you now." But Keats didn't—not then. . . .

It was Aunt Isabelle who outlived most of the older members of the family. The last time Ollie heard about her, she had retired to Newark and accepted a room in her remaining sister's house. According to a tale Carl had from Arthur and repeated to Ollie, "she goes to the library every day and what do you suppose she finally borrowed? A book of yours." She had sent in several determined cards to the library until the librarian ordered the book in self-defence, and she brought it home and twitted Arthur, Henry and Wilbur because they, with all their material advances, "had never gotten into print, but had turned into lawyers, like most everybody else. And here's that good-for-nothing Ollie, with a book called"—holding it up to her eyes—"Mushrooms, and the thing's full of poems. And nobody helped him write it," she concluded; "none of the colleges you went to." Henry and Wilbur and Arthur and Carl laughed, so the story went, but Ollie didn't laugh. He questioned his brother: "Did you say—Arthur said she said—nobody helped him write it?" . . .

VII

EMMA AND LAURA

Ollie had outgrown Emma; Laura had outgrown Ollie. Emma was a dreamy, affectionate girl a year or two younger than Ollie; Laura a distant, mysterious being of eighteen or nineteen. As secretary to a firm of brokers on Wall Street, the lame girl earned an income sufficient to support her sister and herself in a flat not far from the cigar store. But Ollie was no longer their only caller. A man even older than Laura, a member of the firm of brokers, had taken to coming two or three evenings a week. Still, even in the past, though she saw Ollie a good deal and treated him tenderly, she regarded him as her sister's "husband"—for as husband and wife their playmates pretended to consider Ollie and Emma. As for him, he had never seen Laura except as that distant being with an indescribable halo. In the eyes of Mr. Jeroloman, she was a definite entity, a capable intelligence, a woman he couldn't live without. And so, he called at the flat at the most hateful times, when Ollie was visiting Emma, with more than a hope of a word from Laura.

Emma didn't mind. She also worshipped Laura. Ollie was simply an additional believer; one was glad, not jealous, that he felt that way. Therefore, when he read aloud to her, with one wistful eye in the direction of the clock on the mantel, she didn't remove her arm, crooked about his shoulders. She had an eye on the clock herself; and when he couldn't make out the time, or made believe he couldn't and interrupted his reading to ask carelessly, she would tell him quickly. If it was nearly six, he couldn't for the life of him read any more. Not even Monte Cristo. Besides, Dumas' hero bored Emma a

little. She preferred Alice, Little Women and such girlish stuff. He had caught her mind straying during The Three Musketeers as well, and other manly books. She enjoyed the mandolin most of all, when he brought it along and played it like a troubadour. She was too loyal a "wife" to criticize the books or to hint she liked them less. If he found her inattentive, she would find words to defend herself with, but without the need of convincing him, as his other eye strayed toward the clock and his ear waited for an irregular step in the hall. And Emma would also wait. . . .

But Laura didn't understand either. There was a time when she admired what he did, not in a motherly fashion, as it might have sounded to outsiders, but in a way that sent him home dreaming of heroines and white-plumed men on white horses and banners in a parade. This was before she had laughed at the splinter that had made Crusoe stick, the few words almost causing him to destroy the whole theatre, as he would positively have done had she not seen through his misery and tried to comfort him. That accursed night was a night he understood now, since it was then that idiot had called for the first time, he with his fancy manners. It must have been for his benefit, since he was also in the audience, that Laura had made that remark. The fool thought it funny, and she had to come over as fast as she could, put her arm about Ollie, and try to console him. But it was too late, too late. He could tell the gentleman thought *that* funny too, though he didn't laugh at Laura. But he said something patronizing—"our young thespian shouldn't take things to heart so soon—much older men than he have run into splinters at times."

She looked up at the fellow and scolded him. Scolded him? Anybody could tell she wasn't scolding him—Ollie wasn't such a fool he couldn't hear that. Besides, she inadvertently called him, not Mr. Jeroloman, as she had introduced him to Ollie, but Andrew, distinctly enough for the boy's ear to catch it.

On top of this, the idiot was charmed because the gas in the room would have to be turned out. "Ollie requires utter darkness except for his footlights—the toy candles," Laura began. "Of course, of course," the man acquiesced, "just like a regular theatre," and grinned knowingly. That night, when Ollie left, Laura seemed as remote as ever, but with a difference. Formerly, there had been clouds around her—a halo—she was distant to everybody. But now the clouds and the halo had vanished, and she stood there, distant to him alone, even when she said, "You must come again soon, Ollie." The imbecile had to spoil that as well by adding, "Yes, and don't forget to remove the stumbling-block." And Emma—but Emma was as miserable as Ollie, and, like him, said nothing. Besides, she had a bad cold, had coughed right in the midst of the lines, just as they do in the theatre everywhere, and was miserable about that too.

Ollie went away, feeling so lonely that not even the bottom of the sea could have been more lonely. He would have committed suicide then and there, and not have gone home to bed as he did. He would have walked right on into midnight and, in the depth of the darkness and silence and nobody around, would have marched straight out to the edge of Brooklyn Bridge and dropped off. They would see in the morning who it was and what he had done and why. He would have gone through it without flinching, if it hadn't been for the thought, a thought that stole some of the loneliness out of him: If I could only write—I would write a play—not like Robinson Crusoe—but a thing with a real hero in it, and a villain, and a woman they have a duel about. I'd have the woman rush forward, her face as pale as snow—and the villain stab the hero—not like a play, but like life itself. And the woman would throw herself on the body and scream and scream—but it'd be too late, too late. If I could write such a play, and perform it for her,

right in front of her with nobody around, so she'd have to see every bit of it and hear every word. . . .

Meanwhile, Emma also had to go to bed—and stay there. Ollie managed to get up in the morning, but not Emma. Not because of her misery, but because of her cold. It had crept up on her. When he called the next afternoon, with a surly plan in his heart, it was Laura, not Emma, who came to the door—looking indeed as pale as snow. "You mustn't come in now, dear, Emma isn't well." When he saw her strange air, he tried to look past her into the sitting room. There stood still another man, a familiar figure, studying a temperature stick—was it Dr. Schmidt? Laura nodded and smiled a little. "He doesn't think it's serious, but you mustn't come in now—come in when she's better—tomorrow."

Ollie went away mystified. He tried to think, but could only think of himself. He didn't know what to do, unless he should ask his mother, who understood such matters even better than doctors. Yes, she said, Laura had called in Dr. Schmidt, but that kind man wasn't certain—it might be nothing worse than the grippe; he would be able to say this evening perhaps. At present some quinine tablets would do. "The kind he gave you—remember?" Dr. Schmidt was one of those easy-going, family physicians, a genial sentimentalist who believed in old-fashioned remedies. But Emma's case soon required a blunter instrument than *Gemütlichkeit*.

Laura telephoned to Mr. Jeroloman. He promised to get in touch with his own physician and fetch him along. They arrived at a time when Ollie's mother was there. The doctor took charge of the patient and the broker of the household. Dr. Crane, a dapper, efficient individual for whom romance did not exist, deftly discovered that Emma's attack was genuinely grave, and pronounced it acute pneumonia. Laura responding that Emma had also had it as a child, he then pronounced it

chronic pneumonia. Dr. Schmidt, who waddled in during the examination, begged to disagree with him, and an argument, peppered with caustic witticisms on Dr. Crane's side and learned quotations on Dr. Schmidt's, ensued in the sitting room. Dr. Schmidt fared so poorly that he decided, aided by hints from Mr. Jeroloman, to retire from the case. This he did with pompous indignation.

Ollie's position had grown acute. He had been driven into nonentity; he was useless. And yet, he must attempt something. Emma belonged to him; they must not be allowed to take her away. Luckily, a Saturday came. And Emma had had one of those over-night turns for the better. His mother had just come back with the news. Ollie stole away and sneaked up the stairs he knew so well. He would have to speak to Laura first, but he could easily brave her now. She greeted him kindly. He asked an impetuous question. Awake and cheerful, came the answer, and then: "But what have you brought?"

"A book!"

"But what are you going to do?"

"Read it to Emma."

"Oh, no—not now, child."

"She's well enough," he pleaded. "She'd love to listen. I've always read to her."

"But only for a moment," Laura consented; "we still have to be careful."

He hurried into the sick room—and stopped. Although she had changed, Emma looked comfortable, propped up by pillows, and greeted him cheerfully—"Hello."

"Hello"—he returned and stared helplessly at her.

She smiled with so much encouragement that he approached the bed and sat down, gently and carefully. But he didn't know how to begin.

"What have you got?"

"I brought—Alice——"

"Oh, read some, Ollie, read some."

"Do you really want me to?"

"Yes—do."

She looked up at Laura—so did Ollie—and Laura nodded.

Ollie began with infinite care, filling each sentence with emotion, putting all he had never felt before about Alice into Alice's present wanderings. He read without looking up, as if Emma's life and his and their whole world depended on him. Someone interrupted him, Laura touching him on the shoulder. He looked up and saw her nodding again. Emma was blissfully asleep. He got up proudly. Laura said something complimentary. He could afford to be generous now, so he accepted her praise. He had triumphed over them all—that idiot, those doctors and Laura herself. He could forgive her at last. He did, silently, and walked away. And then down the stairs. He wanted to run home, rapturously, but that wouldn't do. He must continue to walk. Like a man. With his victory waving aloft, like a banner in a parade.

A few days later, Emma suffered a relapse. Reading to her, even calling on her, was strictly forbidden by Dr. Crane. The boy was driven back into nonentity, and this time permanently, his eclipse being aggravated by Mr. Jeroloman, who made himself a zealous attendant on Laura and brought presents to Emma: picture books and other harmless contrivances. How could Ollie compete with Wall Street? He might bring her some taffy, which only cost a penny, or some lady fingers, of which she had always been fond. But she was not permitted to eat sweets now. Besides, Laura dismissed some flowers he brought: pink things he had clipped from a flower-pot on the fire-escape. What did she have against flowers? They were taking her away from him. He consigned Laura to a dungeon deeper and darker than Monte Cristo's. One blustering April night, Emma died. . . .

Ollie, alone with himself, destroyed his theatre, the Robinson Crusoe troupe and the play he had begun to write, to be called True To The Last—hero, heroine, villain and all. Dropping the fragments and stuffing the manuscript deep down the stove, this was all he had the strength for. The solemn rite completed, and the stove having performed its share, he could hardly stand. He managed to drag himself back to his bedroom. Without undressing, he crawled into bed, pulled the quilt over him, and wept in a way no one but a boy understands. Fortunately, no one came in; only his mother, passing through to the kitchen or the store. Ollie fell asleep. . . .

VIII

LONG TROUSERS

Ollie graduated from the school on Ninety-sixth Street, was confirmed in the church on Ninety-first and entered long trousers at the age of fourteen. Of these events, the last had by far the most serious consequences. Although he was still a slender boy, he had almost reached medium height. The trousers didn't look too absurd; and after he recovered from his preliminary self-consciousness, they even began to look natural. As he often went about with the grave air of an old man, quite a few people examined his face, rather than his body or the things he drew over his legs. A month or two after his confirmation, had anyone gone to the family rag-bag and picked out the long stockings he had worn, with telltale holes at the knees, or the short pants, with a shameless patch in the seat, Ollie would have stoutly denied they had ever been his. And looking at him now, most of all as he sat at a chessboard, one would have been inclined to agree with him.

He had passed enough examinations at school, from year to year, and answered enough questions in church on the occasions he attended, to earn his graduation and confirmation. The diplomas he brought home were neatly framed by his mother, though one of the two was printed in Latin and nobody could read the document. It was difficult to account for the pinning of these records on Ollie unless one embraced the hypothesis that his examiners were fairly lenient Christians. Outside the chess championship, which he won among his classmates, a dubious feat unrecognized by the teachers, Ollie belonged in the midst of the average grammar-school graduates.

Democratic education had earnestly tried to do something

for him. The curriculum had simply failed every time he rebelled against it or couldn't learn certain lessons, because the interests more vital to him temperamentally called him elsewhere. For the most part, he sat in his seat, a prisoner, listening to voices inside himself instead of the rigmarole of teachers who were quite as deaf to him, independently, as he was to them. Doubtless, there was nothing unusual in this. But it rarely occurred to the exceptional boys: the ones they call "bright" and about whom so many picturesque prophecies are delivered at graduation exercises. How they are the ones who are bound to run a bank some day, or a railroad, or a city —or to go to the House, the Senate, and so on. Wasn't it some such glorious tale the Principal, old Peabody, had spun for the benefit of those who succeed, rung by rung, star by star, stripe by stripe, and three cheers for the Red, White and Blue?

Ollie hadn't heard the whole of the speech. It was not intended for him. Nor did he care when his father referred to the speech as *"ausserordentliches Blech."* The segar-packer fell into a tirade against "filling a boy's head with such twaddle. Let a boy grow up first and earn his living—that's hard enough in this country—without stuffing him with ideas about George Washington *und so weiter.* That donkey brayed like a politician. He ought to run for mayor on the Tammany ticket —we could use another like the last—*ja wohl!"* Ollie didn't listen to his father long. He had heard that type of tirade before. In accordance with which, the old man would go to the polls in the fall and blindly vote a straight Republican ticket, as he always did. Despite which, Carl would eventually go and put his cross over a straight Democratic, as he always did.

There was a reason for Ollie's indifference. Had he not just made a place for himself in the world by winning the championship of a chess club composed entirely of grown-ups? A dark haunt frequented by no less a celebrity than the problem-

composer, Courtenay Lemon, and that eccentric songster, Billy Luks, brother of George Luks, the painter, and the silent hermit, Shropshire, who studied so much philosophy when he should have been playing chess that his game suffered a decline. It was named after Captain Evans, owner of the little basement cigar shop on whose premises the three or four tables stood about. The same Captain Evans who kept a guardian eye on Ollie and eventually raised a fund among the members to provide the boy with the entrance fee to his first New York state competition—at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Way down to Eighth Street, one of his father's customers had taken Ollie, so he might meet a few "real players," instead of the tyros who came into the store and hampered his development. That inconspicuous den down three stone steps started a chess career lasting, on and off, for the next fifteen years.

How he loved the place and haunted it! How he stole downtown on every possible occasion and through every available subterfuge! How he adored the men who idolized him so! Some of them were ages older than he; some had white heads and beards; some were even older than his father. And yet, they sat down with him without hesitation, never patronized him, but pulled out their pipes or ordered a cigar and smoked so gravely as they puzzled over Ollie's moves, one might have fancied a master opposed them.

Billy Luks, the irrepressible, would look on and sing and make fun of Ollie's opponents, or sit opposite Ollie and sing and make fun of himself. Things he had written and often sang to a guitar, kiddish bits that have never been published.

"There was a little boy named Ben.
He went to the market to buy a fat hen.
He fed it on sawdust. It laid a wooden egg.
Out popped a chicken—with a little wooden leg."

These he still sings in the dispensary he runs: the tri-cornered, yellow domicile for the poor he has supervised so long. It looms like an island on Waverly Place, not far from the house, or rather the address where Henry James was born. In another old building, nearer the Tenderloin, one may find a large courteous gentleman scrutinizing manuscripts in the two-by-four play-reading bureau of the Theatre Guild—Courtenay Lemon. Only Billy and Courtenay remain of the men Ollie met in the Evans Chess Club—was it twenty-five, twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago?

How he managed to go down to Eighth Street as often as he did, on a weekly allowance of a nickel or a dime, was more than his father could have accounted for. The boy's mother knew more than she would have confessed to. There were times when he received his allowance in advance and occasionally, a little extra for minding the store against his will. These little extras grew, particularly when he looked abysmally forlorn. She had to humor his whim without questioning it. He had grown abnormally self-centred and sensitive. The least stated suspicion as to his destination would drive him behind a wall so stubborn that only the most artful subterfuge, composed of the kindliest solicitude, could draw him forth again. Then, when she gave him the small round coin, equivalent to his fare both ways, he was silent again—this time because of gratitude. He learned, with many a secret pang, how to play on her solicitude by assuming, as well as actually feeling, this affecting mood and posture.

There was no appeasing his appetite for chess. If he happened to lose a game, so much the worse for his passion. It redoubled its energies, enveloped every thwarted faculty, twisted him into a frantic devotee. The mania waylaid him at night, long after he went to bed, cornered him so completely that he could repeat moves in the dark, without the board in front of him. It was thus he learned to play blindfold, as it

is called. At fifteen or sixteen, he tried playing three games simultaneously against three much weaker opponents. Each of them had a board in front of him, while Ollie, seated in another room, memorized the moves they called out. He answered the moves well enough to carry off all three games and then—fainted. This climax frightened him out of the habit. Even so, had that incident not warned and released him, the picture he had, a year or two later, of Harry Nelson Pillsbury, the former American champion and "the poet of chess," as Lasker called him, conducting not three, but twenty games at once, would have accomplished the cure. It was a spectacle from which Ollie fled, but from which the "world's greatest blindfold genius" did not escape until he lost his sanity and had to be placed in an asylum. . . .

It was during the Evans days that Ollie graduated, and his parents were busy with the problem: What shall we do with him now? Send him out to learn a trade or let him have the next step in education: high school? The Morris High School, the first of its kind in New York, a renovated grammar school in the Bronx, was about to be inaugurated. "Send your children to high school" was the slogan at the time, and "Where are our charter members?" There were many ardent debates in the family. Ollie's father, who had not forgotten Mr. Peabody's address, and Carl, who had climbed a bit without this new-fangled notion, found themselves alone against Ollie's mother, supported by Aunt Isabelle at the head of the relatives, and old Hirschfeld. When the clinching argument produced itself—such a boy can only bring home two or three dollars a week and there's no telling what you'll deprive him of if you cut off his education—the old man and Carl capitulated. So Ollie was sent to high school. He passed a primitive examination, and, since a great many applicants had been accepted and the accommodations were limited, he only had to attend, alternately, two or three times a week. As far as

he was concerned, this proved often enough. A compromise in the family councils had been effected by letting the old man have his way with regard to the selection of the course to be taken by Ollie. He might have elected the classical course, with Latin in the foreground and Greek in the future, or the commercial, with such attractive subjects as bookkeeping, stenography, typewriting, commercial law. Having chosen the business course, Ollie's father was relieved. "At least the boy will learn something of use to him later—and to us." Even Aunt Isabelle had to give in. There was no denying the absence of wealth in the family. "You aren't millionaires," she admitted, and her brother-in-law added: "Not yet."

Ollie lasted two years in high school. His examination papers were pronounced sufficiently satisfactory at the close of the first year, but at the close of the second, he was declared glaringly deficient in a number of studies, notably physiology, zoology and physics. His records were mediocre in the English and German classes. In the one, he had to memorize as much as he could of Pope's Iliad and Milton's Paradise Lost, both of which meant absolutely nothing to him; in the other, old Althaus revelled in trapping and ridiculing the offspring of Germans in this country for neglecting or garbling the mother tongue. In bookkeeping, stenography and commercial law, Ollie was frankly hopeless. As a result of so many delinquencies, he was asked to start the second year all over again, and a written report, painfully succinct and exact, duplicated the news and was mailed to his parents. They sat among the ruins, while Ollie slunk away to Eighth Street and drowned his disgrace in chess. To everyone's amazement, his father came to his defence, advanced the most genuine philosophy against the tragedy, concluding with the consoling reflection: "I told you all in the first place that that's not the sort of nonsense for such a boy." Old Hirschfeld, Aunt Isabelle and Ollie's mother were only too glad to agree with him. Thus,

Ollie was exonerated, and, on the eve of a new century, was set to looking up ads in the daily papers.

This, however, proved still more harrowing than high school. That he—chess champion of the grammar school, of the high school, of the grown-up Evans Club—had to sit in front of endless long columns of want ads, pass all the A's and get down to the B's, where it said, Bookkeeper Wanted, Boy Wanted, or skip all the other letters till he reached the Y's, Wanted a Young Man—this was humiliating. That he should be doing this, he who had recently taken to writing tentative things of his own, things on paper and things on the mandolin, notably the Hudson Breezes Waltzes, the American Patrol March, the Macbeth Overture! The last had been inspired by reading the Shakespearian tragedy at high school and discovering precise equations between Macbeth's misery and his own, until he had to relieve his emotion by pouring out a truly lugubrious affair and dedicating it to the unfortunate Macbeth. That a composer, of all people, had to take out sheet after sheet of note paper and begin once more: "Having read your advertisement in this morning's New York World, asking for an honest, capable, willing young man, in the capacity of office and errand boy, I hereby beg to apply for the position, and would say that I am sixteen years of age." Or seventeen or eighteen, if he aimed at a higher position. Sometimes he was urged to call, and he would go downtown with the trepidation of inexperience, place himself at the end of a long line of applicants, only to hear that the brightest and boldest of the lot had been accepted. Sometimes there were several offices to visit in one trip, and he would hurry from the next to the next, always with less and less courage; and return home with the identical dirge of the day before, his heart too heavy for speech. These excursions went on for several months, but at the end of each, there was always someone to welcome him back with the cheerful phrase—never mind. To spare him the extra moroseness

and fatigue, she got up a little earlier in the morning and marked small x's next to the hopeful ads of the day. Ollie would sit down after breakfast, wearily take out another sheet, drearily dip his pen, and begin: "Having read your advertisement in today's" . . .

His first job came through the graceful intervention of his brother. Carl put in a word with a friend of his in the luxfer prism business, a process for illuminating dark buildings. Ollie did not last long there. He was expected to take dictation, simple dictation it was, and then type it neatly and correctly. But he could not always read his undependable shorthand and therefore inserted wild guesses as to what the boss had said at such and such a point. Carl's friend was patient and lenient, and inventing some kindly excuse or other, which everybody but Ollie believed, sent him home for good.

During the next two or three years, other jobs came and went intermittently, with wages ranging from two and a half to six and even seven dollars a week. There must have been about twenty in all, mostly jobs in offices; but none of them suited Ollie, nor did Ollie suit them. His commercial course at high school might have served him better had he paid more attention to it. Failing this, had he served the interests of his employers more faithfully—but what were such interests to him? Filing bills, letters, odds and ends, for an export concern near South Ferry, and running errands to steamship offices and the Custom House—no, he preferred to steal to the Aquarium and watch the fishes open and shut their mouths, or to sit down in Battery Park and follow the procession of ferryboats and tugs, or wonder about the sailing ships. Scrambling up and down a quotation board in a broker's office on Wall Street for the sake of chalking the myriads of fluctuating reports from the Stock Exchange—this might lead to the Mecca of the American boy's ambition—but it was not going to lead to Ollie's.

Getting on in the world, as old Peabody had painted it, simply never occurred to Ollie. Business did not exist for him; he abhorred and despised it. He knew that such an attitude in such a town was suicidal. He tried to combat it, if only to help out at home. But his efforts were futile; his will grew feebler; his conscience had to force him to look for another job. Each time he was hired anew, he started with refreshed resolutions, but something at the bottom of him—a dream, a disease, a constitutional mania—seized and pulled him back.

In the whole downtown section of New York, no more dismal figure walked the streets and got out of people's paths than the body the composer of Macbeth inhabited and dragged about. He did not belong, and he felt he could never belong. No stranger, no matter how remote and primitive the background of the small town he hailed from, seemed as foreign to New York as this youngster who had been born there, who had never left it and, as far as he could tell at the time, was never to leave it. Almost any outsider, after a short sojourn in town, knew more about it. Such a man entered it with zest, settled in it, made use of it, let it nurture him. Such a citizen progressed, prospered, and in plenty of instances, became a man of the realm, an example for other Americans to come and do likewise. Such folk brushed Ollie aside, figuratively spat on him. But he didn't retort. They didn't and couldn't hurt him.

He had already learned how to protect himself. One of the first masks he wore, a thing that shaped itself somewhere in the recesses of his growing ego, was a monkish habit of resignation. It saved him from going to smash or of despairing to a degree that would have led him to some desperate remedy. He had thought of suicide after reading Goethe's Sorrows Of Werther, Schopenhauer's essay on the vanity of existence and other pessimistic books he took along to while away the time on the train to business and back. But the same type of cour-

age or of pride which made him hang on to a lost-looking cause in chess saved him from laying hands on himself. And his life at home, in a new store in the Bronx the family had moved to, where he made several delightful friends—fellows of his own age and temperament, each with similar knuckles knocking at doors—also saved him. Moreover, he finally landed a job, right in the heart of New York, which, though it paid him but six dollars a week, likewise fed his spirit. At eighteen, Ollie was no longer entirely lonely. He only required a few queer entities to share things with and somehow, though they outgrew him or he outgrew them, they kept him alive. . . .

IX

THE LATEST IMPROVEMENTS

Some of Ollie's relatives had moved across the Harlem River, opened up stores and settled down for the rest of their lives in the borough of the Bronx. Manhattan Island had developed at such a tempestuous pace that many of the oldest settlers, squeezed by the rise of the economic scale, were driven out into the wilds. They cultivated their activities in the new territory, dedicated what is today a city in size, though a small town in spirit, laid out boulevards, avenues and streets, and erected acres of apartment houses that look more or less alike. With Bronx Park and its Zoological Gardens as the principal attraction, the real estate lords disseminated fulsome propaganda as to the superior quality of the neighborhood: the monumental advantages of modern dwellings, with steam heat right up to the roof, the free elbow-room everywhere, the superabundance of trees in some quarters and, most appealing of all, the much cheaper scale of living. The earliest pioneers beckoned to the stay-behinds and these followed in wholesale shipments, each with his moving van, successor to the covered wagon, bulging with the household effects gathered together from all parts of the world, so it seemed.

Under the influence of the relatives, most of them Schneiders, Ollie's parents forsook 1667, joined the parade and rented a larger store on the old Boston Post Road, just off one of the hubs of the Bronx: McKinley Square. The store was thrown open shortly after Uncle Franz had performed his famous operation on the Indian. But this was not all. Ollie's father, overcome with enthusiasm, decided to quit Seidenberg's and manufacture his own cigars. He would simply take out a

license, hire a certain cigarmaker, teach Ollie's mother how to strip tobacco, do all the packing himself, choose or invent the names of the cigars and slip on the rings and labels. Meanwhile, he would learn how to make cigars from Eichanchen, the segar-maker, and get rid of the fellow in time; thus saving the wages he had to be paid. "There's nothing like doing everything yourself and hitting all the nails you can." This thought resulted in the addition of two brilliant features: a newsstand and, for the spring and summer months, a modest outdoor soda fountain. But Ollie's mother could not keep her eye on all places at once. Sundry bad boys of the neighborhood stole some of the papers or turned on the faucets of the fountain and laid their tongues just below, with preferences for the pineapple and strawberry flavors. Newsstand and fountain soon disappeared.

In some respects, the change to McKinley Square upheld the word of the prophets and boosters. The old man had much finer places to walk to; the air was much better for the health; and there were those things they had never had before: windows in all the rooms, a voluptuous bathroom, steam heat, electric light, up-to-date plumbing. Over and above these assets, the elevated had vanished; one could see the sky if one had time to look at it; and there were, if one searched for them, trees not far distant. If one yearned for a summer vacation in the country, one could sit outdoors and get fairly close to it there. In other respects, the parents had made the move a little late in life—a little too late, as it proved. Other people had developed as well and outstripped these elderly dreamers by stealing what was called "an early start." New ideas were cropping up which the younger pioneers discovered or fostered. Among them came the birth and development of vigorous, live-wire groups known as corporations. Assuredly, no one man, especially not an old man, could compete with these oligarchies; and when The United Cigars opened a mag-

nificent double store right across the street, with the most munificent replicas of their show-windows in the Flatiron Building, anyone but Ollie's father might have guessed the inevitable outcome.

He exclaimed: "*Pfui*—they make machine-made cigars over there, we make hand-made cigars over here." This was obvious enough, and that hand-made things in general are more personal and precious than machine-made. But he would not or could not be shown that the country of his adoption, a place in which he had signed his citizen papers back in 1861, as he proudly declared, had created and carried on the machine and utilized the myriad hands and feet of the nation at a velocity and power no single mortal could withstand. The popular argument used to be, and doubtless still obtains, that so vast a continent required machines to conquer it. How could mere hands cover such stupendous areas, tunnel such terrific mountains, navigate and chain such endless rivers, gather the products of such illimitable prairies, sound the depths of the Atlantic and Pacific, and get in touch with the lightning, till even the lightning obeyed? There was nothing for it but to build or work or become a machine oneself. In the course of human events, wholesale replicas were destined to accumulate at the rate of hundreds and thousands to one of the hand-made variety. Only an old-fashioned fool would have questioned or tried to impede such a process in progress. Not only that, but how could one keep up with one's neighbor—a deep-chested, broad-shouldered fellow—unless one sped along at his pace, conquered one's own place on earth with similar machines or still quicker machines: things with the latest improvements? One had even begun to think like a machine and to worship quantity against quality, speed against deliberation, bulk against perfection, uniformity against individuality. There was something antagonistic and undemocratic about these individualists. One had a pretty fair reason for be-

lieving them unpatriotic and, from cause to effect, outlaws and radicals—"or what the hell do they mean by criticizing us?"

In short, most people went the way of most other people, passed up the home-made cigar, crossed the street and bought something "united," something one could trust, a brand one had read about, heard about and seen advertised, a brand so many folk patronized that it must be the right thing to do. After all, no matter what these foreigners may claim to the contrary, "of the people, for the people, by the people" was good enough in the past, is good enough now and will always be good enough. The Bronx was overrun with such optimistic slogans; the whole of New York; the whole of the nation. Billboards, electric signs, banners; the interior and exterior of buildings; newspapers, magazines, books; trains crossing and recrossing the continent; all these and more, many more, advertised some optimistic slogan. Only a reactionary like Ollie's father or a whippersnapper like Ollie was blind to the trend of the times. What did the old fogy come over here for, why didn't he stay where he belongs, the flying Dutchman? He and his measly, ten-cent, home-made Havana weeds!

The flying Dutchman's independence worked against him. He couldn't compete with the trust across the way. Nor ward off one or two happenings in the home. No, he didn't fail, but his wife did—"from stripping tobacco," that other old German, Dr. Schmidt, diagnosed. "Why didn't you let me know sooner?" he demanded. But how could anybody let him know sooner when she had told nobody about it, carried it around inside her for nearly two years, until she had to speak out and confess to the pain she had, the thing the physician called cancer?

Most of all, it seemed, she didn't want to worry Carl, and Carl's wife, Emma. The *Schlangankel* had come home one evening, walked right through the store and, with characteristic brevity, announced he was going to get married. In an-

swer to any imaginary questions, his mother said, never mind, and his father, *ja wohl*. The private wedding, a few days later, in an obscure Lutheran church, was quite as unceremonious as Carl's announcement. He unconsciously lived up to the family tradition of maintaining as much silence as possible about the most serious concerns. They all liked Emma, the new daughter, the new sister; a serene girl so much like his mother that Carl explained dryly: "You can see I had to fall in love with her." He rented a flat not far from the store and, not far from the flat, opened an office of his own: an architect's office in which he drew up plans and blueprints for real estate dealers. Contrary to Ollie, Carl lived outdoors a great deal, supervising the erection of buildings, clambering up and down scaffolds; no scaffold too tall for such a six-footer. He has been building buildings ever since although, according to the latest reports, "other folk still make most of the money." Among easy-going people—*"Komm' Ich heut' nicht, komm' Ich morgen—"* as his father would say, Carl easily held the lead, and fared accordingly.

No—one must be careful not to worry Carl and Emma at the outset. He was still turning over a nominal weekly sum to the household, but one must be sure not to let him give more. Ollie was bringing in ten dollars every Saturday. Out of this, one let him have a dollar to spend, so he might attend an occasional opera, concert or ball game. And one let him have his daily expenses down to Aeolian Hall and back. What was left over, helped, and what came out of the store, helped. Not as much as formerly, down at 1667—but one must be patient, one mustn't hurry, more people were bound to come in time. And the way Ollie was advancing at last, those Aeolian people were certain to raise him again. Hadn't they raised him twice already: from six to eight and eight to ten? Until more people came in—as soon as they found how much finer

hand-made cigars are than machine-made—one must wait. One mustn't complain. Not yet. . . .

But she did complain; argued against selling the store and moving again, this time to a flat like Carl's; held out against the whole family. She admitted one could give up stripping for a while, and some of the housework and waiting on customers, even on Sundays; but as for giving up the store itself, and the manufacturing, she wouldn't hear of it. But she had to. Dr. Schmidt claimed he had come across a new German serum against cancer which would not only cure her, if she consented to the proper rest as well, but would cure her so completely that she could run a hundred stores, if she felt like it. The doctor prevailed on her, and the store was sold. Counters, show-cases, shelves—with the exception of the two Ollie needed for the books Uncle Otto had left him—the entire stock and fixtures, including the Indian himself, still raising his hatchet and defending whatever it was he still defended, went for the sum, after much higgling and haggling, of less than three hundred dollars.

Ollie's father was past sixty when he opened his first bank account. Holding his head as high as he could, he called at the nearest bank and quietly laid down this initial deposit. He didn't see so many visions now. Nor did he go back to the old job the Seidenbergs offered him. No, he would sit at home for a while, make himself and Carl a few "smokers" out of some tobacco he had refused to sell: genuine Havana fillers with Sumatra wrappers. And sitting there, he would look after her and wait for a change. Ollie was helping, Carl was helping, and hewould help too. And when the change came, just as soon as it showed the first sign, he wasn't quite clear as to what he would do, but he would do something. The new flat wasn't bad. Wasn't he of constant use about the house, couldn't he cook a little, go on errands, wash and dry dishes? As for an occupation, whenever she took a nap during

the day, there was still the chessboard and the Staats Zeitung, with Ollie's own name right over the game he had won from the dangerous Delmar—he so young and Delmar so old. Or he could try a short *Spaziergang*—call on Emma and his grandson, Carl Junior, with eyes as blue and clear as his own. He would gently bounce the little rascal on his knee, sing him the thing with which he used to put Carl Senior and Ollie and those three others to sleep: the song about the *Frosch*. That irresistible sound caused little Carl to chortle the same way. Who would believe such a thing could be true? *"Dumm, nicht wahr?"* Or—*"es ist no use dass mann talken tut."* One of these phrases, or one not unlike them, would say it for him. Then it would be time for him to return. He would put on his hat and coat, take his stick, raise himself like a grenadier, lift his head and leave, looking straight ahead. And looking down at her, he would try to say something funny—something to make her smile a little, just as soon as he opened the door. Or soon after—soon after. . . .

X

NEW CONTACTS

The irony of it was that Ollie himself had been working at machines for the past two years in a handsome four-story house on Fifth Avenue, not far from the Waldorf-Astoria. They were known as pianolas and orchestrelles, and he absolutely revelled in them the better part of the day. He could not play a piano nor direct an orchestra; now he felt he was doing one or the other, as his body swayed, his feet pumped, and his fingers invoked intimate nuances from the levers of the pianola or the stops of the orchestrelle. To the other salesmen on the floor who, like himself, sold music rolls to customers, he looked morose, angry, even furious at times. But this was only when he had to pedal popular airs, yards of comic operas and, still worse, the lighter classics: Rubinstein's Melody, Mendelssohn's Spring Song, Schubert's Serenade and hundreds of similar rolls. Most of the customers wanted something tuneful and sentimental—"something my husband will like"—"my children"—"my wife"—and so on. If several members of the family called, the most animated discussions would ensue, in the throes of which Ollie would be consulted. In his company's interests and for the sake of his record as a salesman, he would have to "rave" about each roll. If there were any lingering doubts about the Rubinstein Melody, he would be politely requested and have to resign himself to pump it all over again, grimly hating the Lord who invented such people. Seen through the glass partition of his room, he looked unhappy enough to have earned his latest monicker, Weeping Jesus, as one of the salesmen had merrily dubbed him.

There was an occasional compensation when some enthu-

siast came in for Wagner's Feuerzauber, or a Beethoven sonata, or the Chopin of the preludes, the études, the F minor Fantasie. Or one who demanded a Brahms, not a Liszt, rhapsody, or a Mozart symphony—who even went so far as to ask about Bach. And Ollie felt like Busoni, the Kneisel Quartet, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Ternina and Jean de Reszke, as his insides sang or fiddled or hummed or burst into jubilation. When there were no customers and he had the glass room to himself, he would study until his sight gave out, his feet could pedal no more, or his clothes were drenched with perspiration. The passion he had had to resist so long, to play, not a tinkling, trembling mandolin, but a real instrument, and if possible, an entire orchestra, even in miniature, was released in a private ecstasy, a secret pandemonium. The room turned into a holy cell where only the "great" were allowed to trespass. He dug out rolls that had never been dug out before and, in order to catch up if he could with the sort of education he had yearned for, devoured books illustrating the music he played: Parry, Grove, Huneker, Spitta, Jahn, Mason.

He actually dreamed of writing books of his own and carried the desire to the point of struggling, almost at the outset, with a humble work on the four huge symphonies of Brahms In retrospect, it looked like a few drops of ink in the sea—and he destroyed it. Then he tried the other extreme and evolved a series of paragraphs, concise, restrained and reverent. These prose poems to composers, moving from Palestrina to Debussy, he entitled Apostrophes. He even mused: since I can't write real music, haven't the technical training to essay a sonata or a symphony, why can't I write four different movements with words—an allegro, largo, scherzo, allegro—and call it a symphony? He did produce such a work—a heavy, cheerless affair throughout—and called it The Symphony Of Love. This also fell into limbo, and Ollie returned to the masters.

Among his Aeolian excavations, he dug up the Well-

Tempered Clavichord and enthused over it from end to end. He liked to fancy himself the Hans von Bülow who threatened an audience which applauded something he detested and had played detestably: "If you don't shut up, I'll rattle off the whole Well-Tempered Clavichord"—and of course they shut up. Ollie unearthed Palestrina, Pergolesi, the Scarlattis; loved that eternal child, Papa Haydn, bathed himself in the pellucid serenity of Mozart, steeped himself in the romantic Schumann. He outgrew most of Schumann's music but remained true to the generous human who aided his contemporaries and who wrote Ollie's favorite line: "Mozart is the sky, Beethoven, the earth, Bach, the sea." On the other hand, the young novice didn't eschew the moderns: the perpetual objects, in those days, of the vituperation launched by the venerable critics of the New York press, Messrs. Krehbiel, Finck and Henderson. Ollie fairly wallowed in the "excruciating cacophonists," Debussy, d'Indy and Richard Strauss.

His first god, after a craze for Italian opera had subsided, was Wagner. But Wagner, outside of Tristan, Meistersinger and portions of The Ring, he gradually wearied of; found him pompous, Prussian and long-winded. So Wagner had to come off the shelf and be supplanted by a much greater, a more lasting god. Of all the things he craved at the time, liberty was the highest and most removed, and of the things he stood in the direst need, heroism in the face of gigantic obstacles. For Ollie, Beethoven was the gladiator who carried him from the depths to the heights. As he stood in almost as profound a need of incorruptible serenity, Mozart loomed at the side of Beethoven. His next god was their equal—a man so gloriously human in his effort to encompass the superhuman, that Ollie had to revere and be transported by Johannes Brahms. The old god who came last of all and included them all, the father of the family who finally proved to be the Supreme One, was Johann Sebastian himself. There were literary gods as

well who superseded each other: novelists, dramatists, poets, a philosopher or two; but most of them came a little later. Among the earliest, the author of Macbeth led the way; and he was accompanied, on lower pedestals, by Hugo, Balzac, Thackeray; Schiller, Molière, Hauptmann; Shelley, Keats, Byron; Schopenhauer and Emerson.

Since music and books did not completely satisfy his craving by day, Ollie pursued music and books and chess at night. He invested his allowance and occasional chess prizes at the opera, joining the standees, three, four and five rows deep, in the topmost gallery. Or he went to symphony concerts, the very first of which brought him that adventure in joyous abandonment, Beethoven's Seventh. There was hardly a limit to his passion for adding to the list of operas and symphonic works he had heard. After winning a larger chess prize, he stood four nights in succession under the rafters of the Metropolitan. And after his first experience with Tristan—an event he shared with handsome John Bassett, the cavalier—he and John walked all the way home to the Bronx, at one in the morning of a stormy December, comparing their insane idolatry. The Beethoven period was so acute that the other Aeolian salesmen had to alter his nickname to Beetie. Meanwhile, the more he gave himself to the masters, pedalling like a demon, the more he despised the customers who made him pump Hearts And Flowers, Lange's Flower Song, La Paloma and that grisly confection, La donn' è mobile. The list of tunes they demanded was even longer than the endless things he loved.

It didn't alleviate matters that most of the customers were "swells." That he had the honor of waiting on Harry Lehr, the Beau Brummel of the day, who came sauntering in with his *retroussé* nose in advance and a society lady at his heels. If he liked a roll particularly, the exquisite Harry, effeminate down to his dainty boots, would ask Ollie to let him "hold it on his lap." And what did the young salesman care about

teaching these grand folk the pianola? He had been sent to Fifty-seventh Street one rainy day, umbrella, overcoat, rubbers and all, to instruct one of the Vanderbilt ladies. But she was so preoccupied gossiping with Mrs. Mackay and Mrs. Oelrichs, while Ollie pumped the Meditation de Thaïs, still with his overcoat and rubbers on, that he felt as inanimate as the stool under him. What did the ladies derive from his playing except "Harry plays it just like that"—"No, Harry doesn't"—until Ollie was shown to the door leading back to the street, and opened his umbrella again. Or what did it matter, then, that he waited on the voluptuous Anna Held, who came without her "naughty eyes" or her "nice little way with me"? And that delicate young miss, Ethel Barrymore, who, when she addressed him at all, dropped into a husky aside? And the most popular song-writer, Mr. Gus Edwards, who annoyed him by forcing him to pump a gamut of Edwardsian favorites, opening and closing with School Days?

However, there were customers Ollie enjoyed playing for who did not necessarily order Bach, Beethoven or Brahms. One delightful figure, more like a boy than an old man, with a football shock of the whitest hair, modestly requested folk songs or Wagner; and smoked black, interminable cigars, the while he listened attentively. Not only was his hair of the whitest, but his clothes as well, even in winter, when he went about like a human snow-man, or as if New York were Bermuda—the other island he visited so often. When Ed Proudfit, the genial head of the orchestrelle department, played for him, or Ollie played for him, the snow-man would sit motionless, deep in an armchair, and never give way to a sound. If it was Ollie's heavenly turn, he would marvel: Just imagine—it wasn't so long ago I was reading Huck Finn—and now, only a few feet away? But he hardly dared breathe the author's name. Whenever the old gentleman gave him the directions

for sending the selected rolls, he used a nickname, Samuel Clemens. How droll of him that!

There were other great folk who visited the Hall and who, if they happened to be famous musicians, were often turned over to the "crank of the house" for conversion. It was thus Ollie met the dignified Harold Bauer and the blue-eyed, pink-cheeked Josef Hofmann, and that ardent defender of spinets and clavichords, the sinister-looking Arnold Dolmetsch. On another occasion, two old Germans stepped out of what might have been a fairy tale. They talked and acted exactly like a *Grossmama* and *Grosspapa* out of Grimm. Herr Muetter, the bland impresario who escorted them, whispered to Ollie: "Sh—don't say anything—just play the overture to Hänsel und Gretel." Cramped with embarrassment, he dragged through the prayerful measures as though they were conducting him to his own grave. At the close, the grandfather stole up behind him, patted him and said: "The tempo wasn't bad, my boy—" and vanished. Could that have been Engelbert Humperdinck? Another time, Ollie was allowed to look on, but he couldn't look on, and to listen, but didn't dare listen, to a man with curly hair, who appeared to be at least a prominent banker or broker. But instead of one of these, he turned out to be Richard Strauss. . . .

As for lesser folk, people of Ollie's own stature, he had several cronies at home and several down in Aeolian Hall. They were "artists" too, or called themselves such: youths or young men with enthusiastic attachments and hopeful attainments of their own. Dick Gutmann, who played most any piano piece he could lay his stubby fingers on; Willie Adamsen, who painted witty landscapes and still-lifes; John Bassett, who knew all about women, wrote letters to them and nearly taught Ollie something about courting them; Albert Teller, the popular victim of duffers at chess; William Tisch, a tender-hearted, timid fellow who painted gloomy landscapes and still-lifes;

Harold True, who changed his name to Araldo Trué, because he was studying Italian, and held out for Italian opera against "all you crazy Wagnerians." For several years, these were Ollie's cronies in the Bronx, his evening and Sunday society, his inspirational brotherhood. Many a discussion he listened to—most of them about studios, a glamorous word he heard for the first time—set him to dreaming about a career. And when Araldo, the only one of the group to dare such a thing, rented a studio down on Fourteenth Street, he was an artist in more than mere talk, and Ollie wellnigh hated him with envy. What had he himself done that might entitle him to call what he was doing, a career? The symphony for three mandolins?

He had taught his favorite pals, Willie and Albert, to play mandolins of their own, so that he could write something like a symphony and rehearse it with them. But the rough confusion of sounds attending such rehearsals might have given any casual listener the impression that the three mandolinists were making valiant efforts to silence one another. At length, one of them, with his fiery persistence, vanquished the others —it being impossible for them to prevail against the single tone he struck so vigorously and so often.

"Good God!" Ollie exploded. "How many thousand times do you intend to bang that note?"

"I'm playing it just as it's written," Albert defended himself.

"You aren't!" Ollie retorted. "You're not only hitting it too often, but you always come in at the wrong time——"

"Albert's a gem," Willie interrupted wittily. "His ear for rhythm would make a deaf mute weep."

"You needn't brag," the composer turned on him. "You play your part like the Dead March from Saul. You keep slowing me down to *your* pace, while Albert goes racing ahead till I have to chase after *him*. I do nothing but fill in notes while waiting for you and leave out notes to catch up with him."

"Let's quit for a while," drawled Willie. "Yes, let's," echoed Albert. And Ollie had to agree.

But he not only quit the rehearsals, but destroyed the symphony. After hearing Beethoven's Seventh, he ruthlessly tore up the three parts, sold his mandolin at a pawn-shop and had no further concern with mandolins and writing for them. And, although he still thought of careers and studios, his yearning grew dimmer, and he listened once more to his cronies talking big talk about art, but only painting on Sundays and holidays—when the offices they worked in closed for the day.

Down in the Hall, he had other cronies. Alfred Duggan, who sang bass in oratorio, was the first of his friends to marry (on nine dollars a week), only to be fatally stricken with typhoid soon after. And that attractive madcap, Leslie Steers, who wrote romantic plays about Japan, a land he had never visited, and married Ollie's platonic friend, Mary Weber, not long after Ollie introduced them to each other, feeling high and noble as he watched the course they pursued. And those extraordinary men on the ground floor, the envy of the upper floor, because they were appointed and able to sell, not rolls, but instruments: Pinner, Budracco, Currier, Chase, St. John. Hadn't he seen the incomparable Currier put his thumb to his nose right behind two elderly ladies the salesman took up in an elevator in order to sell a piano; and didn't the ladies have a mirror in front of them and catch the lewd gesture in there, as Ollie saw with a gasp; only to find Currier later, sailing along at the head of the ladies, with a grand piano to his credit? Was that not the acme of salesmanship?

And it was down in the Hall, Ollie met a certain young man and a very certain young lady who were to lead him out of that environment just before his twenty-first birthday—who lured him completely away from the position to which he had risen: the conducting of orchestrelle recitals. The company had appointed him to present these public performances prepara-

tory to the symphony concerts in Carnegie Hall: miniature rehearsals of New York, Boston and Philharmonic programs for which he wrote the program notes as well. They were the proudest of afternoons and evenings as he sat at the bottom of a great reed organ, inside the Prince Albert he borrowed of Budracco or the tuxedo which had descended from his cousin Arthur. He never sat down until he had peeked through the curtain to ascertain whether Aunt Isabelle had arrived with, more and more rarely, his mother. And he always took his place on the walnut bench with an air of dizzy astonishment, as if, when he woke up, it would be discovered that some one else graced those regimentals and rendered Tschaikowsky's Pathétique, Liszt's Tasso, Debussy's L'Après-Midi d'un Faune. And the applause at the close of each number, polite and restrained, rather than vociferous—such a phenomenon must be intended for no one but Damrosch, Gericke or Safonoff. And the eighteen dollars at the end of the week, for doing what one loved to do more than anything one had ever experienced or had ever dreamed could come true—this figure was an additional proof that miracles were at work somewhere. And if this were not a final proof, it was provided by Ed Proudfit, when the head of the orchestrelle department, because of his faith in Ollie as a performer, advised the company to ship a Style W instrument, an eighteen hundred dollar model, to the young man's home, so that he might perfect his technique in the peace of privacy and enlarge his repertoire in accordance with the forthcoming programs in Carnegie Hall. On this mahogany instrument Ollie not only entertained his friends, while his mother and father listened in the background, but passionately familiarized himself with the history of the symphony. And with this instrument always at hand, he had attempted the book on Brahms, the apostrophes and The Symphony Of Love.

Even so, he allowed himself to be lured away—from his

place in the public eye, his perpetually exciting adventures with music, his friends in the Bronx and the affluence he had attained after so many scrimmages with poverty. And those two interlopers, the certain young man and very certain young woman, caused him to resign his sinecure for the sake of a thing so quixotic as a studio—not even a studio, but a room, less than a room—up the stairs of a dismal, rickety building on West Fourteenth Street. . . .

XI

TOMMY AND LANCE

Tommy, as the young lady was affectionately called, even at twenty-seven or -eight was hardly what worldly folk would have designated a sophisticated person. She had been much too correctly nurtured at home for sophistry ever to threaten her. It was indeed a mystery how her father—she had lost her mother in childhood—allowed her to venture on shopping tours unescorted by some relative with a safe and sane pedigree, not necessarily derived from the Cabots or Lowells, but with one or two indisputable claims in the direction of Plymouth and the Mayflower. Contrary-wise, strictly traditional and watchful though he was, the Puritan in Tommy's father relaxed on any occasion when a special indulgence was in order; and so, when she timidly desired a pianola, he bought one straightway and had it brought home to her promptly. But when she wanted some rolls to go with the instrument, naturally, he couldn't undertake still another trip and succeeding trips down to Aeolian Hall. As one of the indispensable dignitaries of the bank in which he held office, he had certain long, noble hours, and they happened to coincide with the only hours one could visit the Hall. Moreover, Tommy knew best what music she wanted, or if she didn't, it was up to her to find out. And, as they had a way at the Hall of trying out rolls beforehand and would even suggest things in case you didn't know what you wanted; and, as they were always so obliging in teaching you how to play a piece that might be beyond your fingers and feet at the start, it was Tommy who undertook these succeeding trips down from Washington Heights. And, seeing so many salesmen standing about, courteously ready to serve her, it was she who had to learn to reduce the plural to the singular.

In other words, that customer was wisest who had formed the habit of asking for her regular salesman: Mr. Duggan, Mr. Steers, Mr. Hartpence, or the young man with the unpronounceable name. Inasmuch as Mr. Duggan, Mr. Steers, Mr. Hartpence or that other young man knew what a customer preferred, especially after she'd been in a few times, and, in behalf of his record of sales per month, was anxious to reciprocate in the matter of attaching himself to regular customers, it was only natural he should keep a conscientious eye on the ascending elevator and wait for one of the familiar faces and figures to step off and look around for him. An *entente cordiale* had developed among the young men, based on the precept: "Keep your hands off my clients." Therefore, when it was Tommy who stepped off, looking as embarrassed as a girl just out of boarding-school, Mr. Duggan, Mr. Steers and Mr. Hartpence didn't rush forward. "She belongs to Beetie" was the silent understanding. The young man who stepped forward would say: "He's in his room, Madame—have a chair while I call him." And she, instead of being tactful and saying, "Oh—but you'll do just as well," would carefully sit down while he, busy most likely trying out infernal things in his room, as anyone could hear, would have to be rudely disturbed with, "Hey, Beetie, choke the racket, there's a lady out here asking for you."

Having taken his fingers and feet off Bach right at a time when he needed the old man most, Beetie would emerge, glaring and glowering. Endeavoring to hide these looks behind a salesman's impersonal front, he would advance toward the wretch who had demolished his glorious reverie. Quite prepared to say formally, "Good-morning, Madame, what can I do for you?" he would catch sight of the culprit in blue, halt, move forward again, and then stammer: "Oh—good-morning, Miss—what can I do for you—won't you step this way?"—almost as stereotyped, to be sure. The other salesmen would grin at his

discomfiture, while the miss quietly followed the young man. Standing at grave attention, he would hold the glass door open for her, and then quickly follow her into his private office. . . .

From the first, he had tried out his pet propaganda of urging her to buy something "better" than she asked for. He might sell her only two or three rolls in the course of a fairly long session, thereby seriously affecting his average. But if customers showed any sign of caring for what he cared for, betrayed the merest glimmer of responsiveness, or were not averse to being led a little "higher," he would spend two or three precious hours converting them. It was thus he gradually converted his favorite customer, although, the first time she called and was put at his disposal, she had modestly asked for some of the "latest records." He let her have two or three comic opera selections and then—well, there was something about her not unworthy of musical encouragement. Whether it was her shyness, so much like his own, or the kind of helpless appeal she made or he thought she made—it had caused him to play one or two classical records, experimentally, and to say: "You don't have to take them, Miss, if you don't like them. But if you do, you'll find you won't tire of them so soon"—thereby ignoring one of the company's instructions as to perfect salesmanship. He should never have admitted, or even hinted, that a customer could ever tire of a single roll purchased there; in fact, the roll would improve with age.

Among the other music salesmen (there were seven in all, each with a room of his own), there was one who, when he came in to disturb Beetie with reference to Tommy, usually called: "Hey, Krimmie—Tommy's outside." This man, Hartpence, had a right to such intimacy. He was Krimmie's foremost crony in the Hall and the best chum he had ever had anywhere. In the beginning, like the rest, he had always referred to the intruder as "there's a lady outside" or "a customer of yours." But as the lady developed into Krimmie's favorite customer,

and this fellow, Lance, was informed, or did not have to be informed as to the course of events, he also learned and was permitted to call her Tommy. Not only this, but whenever Krimmie was busy with another customer at a time when she called, Lance would wait on her until Krimmie was free—and, in many instances, would cleverly find a way to take the customer off his friend's hands, so that the latter might go to Tommy at once, instead of silently fuming at the person who kept them apart. But there were still other reasons for the intimacy between Krimmie and Lance.

Lance didn't care much about music; not at that time. In fact, he had been the ringleader in teasing Ollie, the one who had dubbed him Weeping Jesus, Beetie and finally Krimmie. But there was another side to Lance. He wrote poetry. Not that Krimmie cared much about poetry then; certainly not by comparison with music. But Lance showed his writings to Krimmie, and Krimmie showed his to Lance: the apostrophes he was writing so painfully slowly. They went out to lunch together. And sat in Bryant Park on a bench under the statue of Washington Irving. The stuff Lance talked was irresistible. So were the poems he read aloud. The stuff Krimmie talked and the prose he read aloud, very timidly at first, may not have been irresistible. But Lance vowed they were. All the while, as well, they talked about literary careers, studios and freedom —Lance aggressively, Krimmie wistfully. Consequently, when Lance, always as abrupt as he was adventurous, suddenly announced on a certain mad day in spring: "To hell with Aeolian Hall—I've taken a studio—come and have a look at it—" Krimmie, blinking in the sudden sunlight, slowly followed him down to Fourteenth Street, up the stairs of the dismal, rickety building, right to the top floor itself, and, entering his studio, was dazzled by the sunlight again. But Lance had further designs on his chum.

There was another room, almost as magical, at the other end

of the hall, a smaller room for less rent—"only six dollars a month." Krimmie didn't want to see it, wouldn't look at it; Lance's room had already overwhelmed him. "It can't do you any harm," Lance persisted; "it's a good thing to know about in case—" "There's no such in case with me," Krimmie retorted. But, as Lance had every reason to know, there was more of despair in his tone than of stubbornness. There was nothing now he wanted more than to start a literary career and no other way of starting it properly except in such a room.

Krimmie didn't rent the other room. Not right away. But he looked longingly at the card Lance had tacked on his door and on the letter-box down in the vestibule: *Alanson Hartpence*—just like that, straight across. And eyed with still greater longing the blank letter-box next to Lance's and the blank door at the other end of the hall. He tried to imagine his own card snugly fastened to both. And to see his own books and belongings in there, in the room so much like his chum's—and for even less rent. But there was a difficulty, a tender obstruction, a heart-breaking consideration. As they descended the stairs, down into the gloom once more, it was Lance who touched on it tactfully—who said ever so gently: "Why not tell Tommy about it?"

There were reasons he couldn't tell Tommy. As Lance already knew. It might hurt her. She had other hopes; so had Krimmie. Not exactly definite ones. They were both too immersed in poignant vagaries and so persistently reticent about a sharp, determined future. For one thing, she was seven years older. Not that this mattered fundamentally. In a brave little way, she had "confessed" her age to Krimmie; and he, of course, pooh-poohed such nonsense, in a casual, manly fashion. And they never mentioned such nonsense again. On the other hand, they had no meeting place. Krimmie couldn't call on her in her home on Washington Heights. Her well-to-do father would have asked a few unanswerable

questions. And the meetings in his glass room in Aeolian Hall, to which Tommy came more and more often without buying any music—such a rendezvous was too open to inspection. Going to places like Macy's for lunch—for which excursions Tommy quietly insisted on sharing the bills—such places were hardly private either. Meanwhile, Krimmie was earning a genuine salary: measly money in the light of Washington Heights standards and her father's ideas on the subject. But the conductor of an orchestrelle might go still higher, and eventually? Eventually might be many years off, might easily drift into never—and they without such a room all the while. He himself was virtually without a home. His mother was gone; and what was left of his father dwelt with Carl and his family; made "smokers" there and lingered and languished another year, poring over the chessboard, or singing *Frosch* to Evelyn, as well as Carl Junior. Still, a bare room, in a ramshackle rookery? Without funds or the slightest experience with editors—and nothing more substantial than chess to fall back on? He couldn't break it to her. It was too much. He would silently stick to what they had planned. . . .

Nevertheless—less than two weeks after Lance had fastened his name to a door and a letter-box, Krimmie was awkwardly tacking his to a similar door and letter-box—straight across both. He and Lance and Tommy had gone about shopping on his last pay-envelope; down all sorts of second-hand shops and curious dens and dives. It was enchanting. Especially the articles of adornment they bought in a five-and-ten-cent establishment—knick-knacks which provided those final touches of form and color in the absence of which the room might have looked a bit drab. Lance was right, as usual. Being an artist was clearly the most inexpensive profession one could possibly undertake. And there was absolutely no joy like it—nothing like it. At times.

PART II
KRIMMIE

I

DON JUAN

Had Tommy ever asked him anything about his past (using the word in the sense most people have in mind when they give a man a shady look and begin: "What about what's-her-name? —haven't I heard someone say?"), Krimmie would have had a hard time telling her. Not because he was ashamed of what had occurred, as one might hopefully suspect, but because he was ashamed, somehow, that the amorous affairs in his life could not be truthfully dignified with the ambitious term, his past. Had she ever asked, he would have had to hang his head, vaguely study the lines in the palm of his hand and try to embellish the story of Emma and Laura. But Tommy, sitting in the studio now, would have seen through such a device. He couldn't have made much more than there actually was in his adventure with them—he only ten to twelve at the time. Such affairs happen to every child—she, if she said anything, must have said. And with respect to the next few years, when there was, alas, nothing vital to confess—a period so arid of romantic detail that anyone might reasonably have asked, "What the deuce was he doing all the time?"—Krimmie could have made no impression whatever. Even with regard to the early years in the Bronx—when May, Maude and Mary appeared and disappeared—had Tommy breathed an expectant "ah," Krimmie would have had to answer "oh."

He was no Casanova, Cellini, Don Juan, and would have felt it acutely, had he tried to hide behind Münchausen, Don Quixote or George Moore, and invented a tale or two. He had, however—let it be recorded with credit—spent two substantial years silently yearning for May: that live animal at the other

end of the block on Boston Road. He had suffered every conceivable agony, along with those heavenly meditations on suicide which pursue an adolescent nocturnally and offer to embrace and comfort him. He had passed through the entire Inquisition, the daily and hourly rondo of such an ineffable courtship, with the inevitable torture of having *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* reject him with the self-same smile. He had waited and watched for her in her favorite haunt, Kupchik's ice-cream parlor. But whenever she came, she came, of course, with somebody else; and Ollie's cream melted to wormwood. There was, alas, nothing original in this: she was simply a goddess and he less than her slave. The offerings he proffered the unattainable—didn't she accept them? Not if one call the way she had of accepting them, accepting them. When he brought a sacrifice, she stood on the stoop and he on the pavement below. It was always thus; and thus it should have been. Had she ever stepped down to his level, there is no doubt he would have knelt and kept the distance between them inviolate. As a matter of fact, May was an inch or two taller than he. Even so, he would have knelt, had she ever come down from the stoop.

The other boys, or rather, young men, ridiculed him openly. All the more reason to love her tenaciously. And even ridiculed her—not quite so openly. "What does he think he sees in her?" demanded handsome John Bassett, and entered upon a heroic campaign in an effort to convert Ollie to pictorial reproductions of actresses: Anna Held, Fritzi Scheff, Amelia Bingham, Ethel Barrymore. Or took him close up to actual "queens" right across counters in department stores; spoke and flirted with them, until they rolled their eyes in provocative responses. But Ollie was no good at that game. There was nothing austere in it, far-away, ethereal, divine. And when some of the young men, or rather, the older among them, talked about "women," bragged about their knowledge with a worldly

air and compared intimate notes about them, Ollie listened in silence—and not without some respect for their wisdom. But when they went up and down Boston Road in quest of them, and even carried their bravado beyond Boston Road—the boldest of them—and, after repeated retreats, were daring enough to penetrate what grown-ups discreetly call, "a house of ill-repute," Ollie, manfully fighting to be their equal in most, if not all, things—and anxious not to be derided as a "sissy"—followed them into the house. When his friends compared their new notes—the real thing at last, and what a thing it is to be a man—and endeavored to tease the backward boy about what he was missing, his heart sickened and he clung desperately to his thought of May. The next time they all went downtown—often with a new, though trembling convert—Ollie would go along and, as before, instead of giving in to one of the beauties who courted him unmercifully, sat in the reception room and waited for the men to reappear. When one of them "caught" something, miserable though he was, and scared through and through, he was the real man amongst them; he had been "christened" at last. With one exception, the crowd revered the hero.

Still bearing May in mind—and Tommy's potential question—there was a girl, in the reception room itself, who influenced Ollie peculiarly. Her name was Edna. This girl was not remarkable—although young, vibrant, fairly new to the game and attractive in more than a physical way. Her method of arousing Ollie's interest, in lieu of conquering his stubborn caprice, had been tried before. Nor was his attitude remarkable. There had been other youngsters (Edna herself had met them) who loved to invite her to a table, treat her to a drink and then sit back and furtively wonder about her. Obviously, if they could talk at all, they intended to draw her out; schemed or blundered into getting her to talk, which she did with a consciously unconscious air that enthralled them. In

the midst of her recital, which sounded so hard to impart, Ollie felt he was on the trail of a wonderfully heartrending story, the particularly amazing confession of how a girl in her teens had come from a small town to the big city (it could hardly be too late to save her) and—well, there she was and here he was, and he'd better begin to help her at once. It was extraordinary that she had chosen him to tell it to; something significant in their meeting so accidentally; an omen he ought to act on without further hesitation. But how to begin—he mused in perplexity. Only to have her smash the meditation with: "Come on, kid, what do you say?" . . .

A few years later, while he was looking for something "strong" to write about—the realistic mode having arrived in America, mainly *via* the neo-Russians—Ollie, or rather, Krimmie, although the mode was anathema to editors, dug out that early adventure of his. Adding a few adornments in order to point a moral, he tried to tell the tale in the approved, detached manner: calling himself Amos Lane, a "humanitarian," with ideas of regenerating the fallen, and entitling the story Edna. The manuscript was categorically rejected everywhere, until about ten years later, a man from the country of Bohemia, one Guido Bruno, published it in the format of a Chapbook; nay, flaunted it forth, without consulting the author, by adding the compelling sub-title, The Girl Of The Street. The author would have nothing more to do with the publication—but not so a man named John Sumner, the successor of Anthony Comstock, founder of the Society for the Prevention of Vice.

About the time Theodore Dreiser's The Genius was suppressed and confiscated, Edna was hauled off to court, along with the editor and publisher. The author was not summoned, but he got into the papers, right among the headlines, as a horrible example to the young and an injurious immoralist generally. The redoubtable Frank Harris (whom Krimmie

has not met to this day) promptly appointed himself the arch defender of the pamphlet and rushed to Bruno's aid. The author of The Bomb appeared in court, delivered impassioned speeches in Bruno's behalf and, under the caption, The Prosecutor-Judge, unloaded a drastic attack on the vice-crusader, Mr. Sumner, and the magistrates on the bench, Messrs. Murphy and Frothingham, in his own periodical—Pearson's. There was one continuous hullabaloo for a while. Harris wrote a personal summary and interpretation of the story itself, part of which ran:

"A young man walking on Broadway catches a girl's eyes; she smiles saucily at him; he is attracted by the roguish gayety of her glance and follows. Then in spite of hesitancy, he speaks, and to his amazement finds that both the girl who smiled at him and her companion are unfortunates. He goes with them and gets Edna's story, an unloved childhood, youth numbed by the work, work, work of a department store; no relaxation, no gaiety, no healthy companionship with the other sex. Then naturally the revolt and the life of the streets. If the author had wished to make the story salacious all he had to do was just to show love in the man, real pity and affection which would have drawn out the best in the girl, and as a symbol Edna would have refused to take money from him and would have given love for love. Victor Hugo has splendid lyrics how love can work this miracle, can give an unfortunate her girl's soul again immaculate." And so on. Then the editor of Pearson's added: "The author is content with the commonplace: the man finds greed in Edna and is repelled by it: 'Her eyes demanded her price. The truth chilled him.' He gives her ten dollars in contempt and leaves her; it is all sordid, he says, 'all business,' and it fills him with disgust. As he leaves her he finds the same sordid greed in himself, in everyone in this dreadful competitive civilization." Then, giving the prosecutors the full benefit of his exasperation, Harris

concluded: "Is it any wonder that art and literature find difficulty in coming to flower when such brainless persecution is possible?"

"More than 350 copies of the story," wrote the gleeful Tribune, "were confiscated." That paper, as well as the other local papers, had a lovely time while it lasted. Bruno himself wrote an article called A Reign Of Terror. Distinguished citizens sent in letters of protest: the Reverend Percy Stickney Grant, ever ready to wade into hot water, stated it as his opinion that "the Society, in trying to suppress vice, ought to print the story and distribute it gratuitously, for I never read anything that made prostitution so sordid and loathsome. I submitted it to a lady of decidedly conventional views, who is the mother of two sons. Her view of the story, however, coincides with my own." Leonard D. Abbott took up the cause in Current Opinion, Alexander Harvey in The Bang and George Sylvester Viereck in The International, where he called the prosecutors "a lot of offensive monkeys." Then followed the miracle—a defence of the story by Dr. Frank Crane, from which Krimmie had barely recovered when the climax fell.

It was a letter from London which Bruno carried in triumph before still another judge, Judge Rosalsky of General Sessions, to whom the case had been appealed. The letter said in part: "Of course, it is not decent according to the convention that sex is indecent and should never be alluded to; but as nine-tenths of all current literature is about sex, when it is not about fighting, there is a public need for stories which will show the unattractive side of it instead of adding the glamorous enchantments of art to the fascination that nature has cast over the subject for her own purpose. If your societies for the suppression of vice had any sense they would make a tract of it and distribute it broadcast. Unfortunately, they are stupid enough to confine themselves to protecting the repulsive side of vice from exposure, which is perhaps the reason why they are

always so strongly supported by people of dissolute habits." The letter required no signature, but it was signed by George Bernard Shaw.

A little later, Edna was exonerated in court, Bruno was declared innocent, the confiscated copies were returned to him, and he immediately printed a second edition, raising the original price from a dime to a dollar or two. The publisher must have earned quite a tidy sum, since the author never received a cent. All this time, the latter was somewhere in town, regarding the entire proceedings in retirement, his heart for the nonce somewhat contaminated with scepticism, if not with actual cynicism. He clearly remembered the adventure itself, recalled how he had come to write the story; and so, when Bruno eventually asked for an affidavit of his own, wrote a carefully veiled satire, containing a hint that the story should have been suppressed solely "because of the artistry it did not contain." Bruno did not submit the document in court, but printed it subsequently, under the stunning caption, The Author of Edna, The Girl Of The Street. The publisher had had the last word, after all. . . .

Now, Ollie was not saved from the original Edna in the manner described in the story. Nothing less than his constant thought of the girl at the other end of the block on Boston Road caused him to flee from Edna. And it was this thought of May which made him resolve never to go "downtown" again; and not one of his friends could budge him from such a determination. One day, not long after his final excursion, Ollie hit upon a gigantic campaign. He had been saving his money for some time, by cutting out operas and concerts, and directed his energies toward concentrating for one ultimate sacrifice: he would buy her an entire lawn tennis outfit. Willie Adamsen and Ollie had been swinging rackets of their own at each other, and May knew about it; saw them pass on their way to Crotona Park and stopped them to ask about the game.

This was enough for Ollie. He bought her a net, a racket, a set of Wright and Ditson balls and brought them to her stoop. The height of the sacrifice was recognized when May invited him to come and teach her how to serve, receive and volley; appointed him to meet her on a court in Crotona Park the very next Saturday afternoon. He started out far in advance of the hour, swinging his racket as though he held a lance or a battle-ax, and wellnigh braining people in his path. He arrived at the rendezvous almost an hour ahead of time and in plenty of time to see—but could that be May herself? There she stood in all her glory, on one side of the court, with the racket in her hand! Could it possibly be she was even more impatient than himself? Why, she's beginning to bat a ball about—right across the net and laughing! And the ball comes back again! The shots couldn't be boomerangs? Was there a fence on the other side against which they bounced and returned? He must step around these trees, look at the other side and see—what was merely another person, who popped the ball back, skillfully and carefully, so May might not find too much trouble at the start in reaching it with a repartee. Ollie recognized the gentleman as one of the ones who habitually escorted the lady into Kupchik's ice-cream parlor. He turned away, dizzy and limp, groped along out of the park, stumbled against a few people, found the road back to the store, laid his racket in a closet, and shut the door on his last thought of such a divinity. For some time to come, the favorite word in his vocabulary was the adjective, perfidious. The slightest and most foreign provocation caused him to employ it scornfully.

At this point, a romantic young lady named Maude tried to console him. But he would have none of her. She liked to chew gum, ride in open trolley-cars, lean her head against his shoulder and invite him to look at the moon. And there was a young lady who tried to console him, not physically, but

platonically. She talked "ideals" with him and got him to talk the same. Mary would invite him to her home, where the reception room was suffused with the subdued light of shaded candles, nestling in brackets overhead, and let him sit at the other end of the couch and spin long words with her. He liked her just as she wanted him to like her and, in a glamorous moment of self-sacrifice, introduced Leslie Steers to her. It was thus those two fell in love and were married; and Ollie felt like the Plato to whom Mary had introduced him. . . .

Now—had Tommy ever asked him about this past of his, perhaps Krimmie would have told her the foregoing. But she didn't ask him. There was something in her which must have stopped her; or something in him. Just what this was to an absolute certainty is debatable. Possibly, there was no need for asking anything at all—no immediate need. . . .

II

FAME

THE place in which Lance and Krimmie took most of their meals, Kiel's Bakery, stood and still stands on the northwest corner of Eighth Avenue and Fifteenth Street, a block and a half from their studio building at 232. 232 is still there, but all the denizens, with the exception of Clark, the printer, and one or two others, have vanished. This smiling, lame Irishman is doubtless as poignant a symbol to the "If-I-can-only-get-into-print" youth of the present as he was to a pair of light-haired fellows who climbed up and down for years and had to pass his shop both ways. Occasionally, when Krimmie went to lunch with Tommy—whenever that tactful lady felt flush—he was conducted to Silsbee's Chop House and sat down to the most succulent meals, till the devil came along, burned the place to the ground, and the lovers had to go elsewhere. On other occasions, when Krimmie and Lance felt fairly flush, they went to the dining-room in the basement of Siegel-Cooper's Department Store. It was good to get away from the gang and the eternal smell at Kiel's and to bask in the quiet session after dinner of reading aloud whatever it was they had finished or nearly finished writing.

Back in 1904, however, and for a number of years, Kiel's Bakery was and generally had to be the principal caterer to their three-a-day requirements. Whenever they didn't have the "price," the little fat baker would let them "hang up" till tomorrow—or the next day. That's why one remembers his name. The distinguishing feature of the place was its smell: an awful stench one could never grow quite accustomed to. In the New York heat of July and August, when Lance

and Krimmie often had to drag their cots to the roof of 232 and try to sleep there, the thought of going to Kiel's was nauseating. The dining-room was isolated in the rear, a blunt, square hole without ventilation, packed with tables and chairs.

Outside the inmates of 232, few artists patronized the haunt. Marsden Hartley, the painter-poet; Ernest Roth, "Louis the copper-scratcher"; H. Latimer Brown, the lachrymose portrait-painter and whilom international cricketer, who initiated Krimmie in the art of smoking a pipe; Bob Williams, robust in physique but not so robust in landscapes; Albert Dreyfus, the sad-eyed sculptor, who never had enough funds to cast his clay models in marble or bronze, and therefore had to let them stand about laden with fresh, wet rags to keep them from cracking—truly a helpless profession. These men, with Lance and Krimmie, were the most constant of Kiel's *habitués,* along with a seething mass of ponderous truck-drivers. The laborers regaled the artists, heartily and noisily, with what is called local color. Many a magnificent bravo caused many a pale, skinny dreamer to draw forth a surreptitious pad for a sketch or a note later to be carried into an ecstatic portrait, story or poem

Hartley, alone, held himself aloof from such doings; fondled the canvases he had brought from Maine; whistling all the while as only he could whistle. Mysterious, bleak landscapes, with the depths of black upon black unrelieved by the solitary gray cabin or troop of gray clouds in the foreground or distance. Or stark, brooding still-lifes, in which an ivory gardenia loomed like the heroine in a tragedy of old. When spring came, if he could afford nothing else, Marsden managed to buy a gardenia for his buttonhole The others thought him a snob: his ways were so superior; his devotion to William Blake and Francis Thompson seemed a little mad; and his exquisite tastes, the exotic longing he had for warm, precious stones, aggravated the impression These predilections and

starved, mystical obsessions tended to give him a place apart. And he wrapped his coat like a toga about his spare form, held his extraordinary nose in the air, used his aristocratic cough as a warning not to come too close. But his friends learned to know Marsden better before many years elapsed. Among them all, he was easily the loneliest. The demonstrative Lance was the first to discover this. The doctor in Lance—he having once studied medicine—drew him out, made him feel a little at home, in New York. Whenever he could manage it, Marsden stole away from town and, whenever he couldn't help it, stole back again. None of the young men ever froze so bitterly, or looked as frozen as the eagle from the state of Maine. . . .

There were a number of waitresses at Kiel's, all of whom spoke broken English, a jargon almost as guttural as the sounds the baker gave vent to. One was tremendously stout and good-natured and answered to the playful name of "Hippo." She was secretly in love, so Louis and Lance asseverated, with Krimmie. "But I've never encouraged her, not even in the cause of literature," he denied. A red-headed slattern provided the "comic relief" to the bakery. "Dumpy" could spill things in all directions, without ever hurting the proprietor's feelings. And there was a Norwegian girl with a superabundant "sex appeal" who did interest Krimmie—in the cause of literature. He wrote a realistic novelette, in which three artists, true to the tradition, tried to "seduce" her. After running away with a prize fighter and eventually deserting him, she can now be seen—"waiting on customers again." Krimmie called her "Erna Vitek."

The appetizing menu for the day was scrawled on a blackboard. After a while, one could read the items blindfold. The floor was generously sprinkled with fresh sawdust every morning. It was called "yellow snow" by the oldest man who frequented Kiel's—a venerable figure with a stooping gait, a

beard as long as Methuselah's and a peering glance reminiscent of the Ancient Mariner. One might have supposed him the retired harpoonist of an obsolete whaler had one not heard of him as the eccentric who lived on Fifteenth Street, in the midst of a great heap of rubbish, out of which, in some magical fashion, divine bits of canvases grew. Some of these were removed to the Metropolitan Museum—after his death. It was then the authorities gave him a posthumous exhibit and critics hastened to hail him as "the American mystic who spent years in perfecting one tiny canvas." Krimmie used to watch him shuffle out of Kiel's, after a breakfast of sweet buns and coffee—miraculously like his own—and follow him. The old man would take a few steps, then stop and turn about, like the slow hub of a great wheel. Then he would move forward, pause in front of a stationery shop and curiously and minutely eye the toys and picture post-cards displayed in the window. Though Krimmie never dared address him—he knew that tall, sloping figure was Albert Ryder. . . .

There were two places to which the young author directed himself in the interests of his income: the Rice Chess Club on the East Side, almost entirely frequented by Jews, and the Manhattan Chess Club in Carnegie Hall, with a large membership of affluent business men. At both clubs, because he played on their teams in matches against other clubs, he didn't have to pay dues. It frequently happened he didn't have the price to go to Kiel's of an evening and hadn't the heart to hang up again. He would start for Fifty-sixth Street along toward six o'clock, walking all the way to save the carfare, order some sandwiches, lunch cakes and coffee from the caterer at the club and tell him, "I'll pay you later"—a hint the good Dan understood. Affecting nonchalance, Krimmie would wait for what other professionals in similar circumstances dryly called a customer. When that gentleman arrived, and one hoped he would prove to be the bull-headed, bull-necked

prosecuting attorney, James W. Osborne, who played like a perpetual beginner and always lost like a gentleman, one sat down with him, offered him the odds of a queen, rook, knight or pawn and two moves, as his case warranted, and agreed on a dime or a quarter as the friendly side bet per game. If one wasn't too exhausted after the literary labors of the day, or too feeble on an empty stomach, or an appetite craving something else besides sandwiches and cake, one would win a game, draw a game, lose a game, well on into the evening, the night, the small hours of the morning. If one hadn't won enough bets, one would hike back to Fourteenth Street. If one had won a little more than enough, one would board the slow Seventh Avenue car.

If Krimmie came out a quarter ahead, the evening wasn't so bad; he could at least pay Dan. Forty or fifty cents were still better; he could pay Dan and not hang up at Kiel's in the morning. If he came out a dollar ahead, on a Sunday when old Ettlinger opposed him—the cigar manufacturer who never played for less than a dollar a game—this was simply too stunning for words. If he found himself with two dollars—or even three? But one mustn't begin to improvise or to poach on the rights of Münchausen. Besides, there was another column, a darker record in the ledger. If the debits and credits balanced, one had to ask Dan to wait till tomorrow. And if one came out behind, well—the customer wouldn't mind; the chances were he would say: "Wait till we meet again—will you be here tomorrow night?"

For the greater part of the next ten years, these jaunts provided the most regular source of Krimmie's income. As to the intermittent irregularities, when Tommy didn't provide for them, they were taken care of in the form of prizes he won in tournaments. These sums mounted to ten, twenty and as much as thirty dollars at a time. But as most of the tournaments lasted for months and one had to sit down once or twice

a week and stick to games which dragged into six, seven and eight hours at a stretch, the contests robbed one of every available ounce of nervous energy. In the last tournament in which Krimmie participated—an American national congress running every day for two or three weeks—he lost nine pounds. "That's nothing," Roy Black, the Brooklyn champion, challenged him; "I've lost thirteen." Krimmie took part in tournaments everywhere: at the Rice Club, where the prizes were smaller and one inhaled the worst tobacco smoke; at the Manhattan Club, where the prizes were larger and one enjoyed the aroma of Havana cigars; or at the gatherings of the New York State Chess Association, at one of which he tied with José Capablanca, the present world's champion, only to lose the play-off by the most heartrending of margins, due to the smallest of slips he committed in the end-game. In addition to the tournaments, there were those team matches with rival organizations. Krimmie rarely missed such contests and acquitted himself so much better than when he fought for himself and his necessity, that he forsook chess with at least the one memory of never having lost a game where his club was concerned. They gave him a nickname for that: Old Reliable. Old because, in his early twenties, he was already "a battle-scarred veteran." He taught Tommy the moves so she might come, watch him in action and inspire him. But she only came once. . . .

Although he labored arduously and awkwardly, something was constantly wrong with his writing. After a long era of nothing but rejection slips, he received those polite little notes regretfully informing him that the tales he submitted did not quite fit in with the editorial policy. He insisted on composing and sending out stories not only with "unhappy endings," but with gloomy beginnings and melancholy middles. He had an incurable mania for writing about the poor; could attach his affection to no other class in town. And since he didn't see

the country until he had passed twenty-three, he never referred to animals, trees, streams, hills, flowers. Nobody could read the things he wrote and be happy reading them; or find any panacea or uplift in them. The editors had to consider their readers and advertisers—couldn't print another issue if they ignored this primeval law. One might quote what an editor of Everybody's Magazine had to say to him, the great man sitting at ease in a palatial office of the Butterick Building—overlooking the teeming poverty of Little Italy—and Krimmie bunched in front of him, with his head bowed low and his ears wide open.

Here was an unprecedented honor; one was getting on after all or about to get on. This gentleman, so white-haired, so benevolent, had asked him to come down and discuss that story of his, The Dance Of The Hours. The editor had "made" O. Henry, lifted him "out of the mire" by sending him checks in advance, helped him pay a bill at Mouquin's, for example, whenever he was too drunk or too broke to attend to it. This was one of the entrancing anecdotes O. Henry's benefactor told his listener and then: "That's how we brought him up to where he is now. He was queer enough at first, wayward, needed a lot of patient nursing. Where would he be this very minute if he saw only the seamy side, the cloud without the silver lining? I don't mean to say you're another O. Henry, but you have fine ingredients in that story—the finest of all, heart interest. If you would stick to that and eliminate the sordid details, without for a moment sacrificing the truth of what you say—and give us more of the girl in your story—let her live at the end, not die—well—you'll make your fortune in time, young man. Mark my words." But Krimmie couldn't mark them.

"Look at those people down there," the kind man suddenly observed. "Those Italians are poor beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"Yes," the young man agreed.

"Do you see their windows and fire-escapes? Can you make out those pots strewn with all the flowers of the rainbow?"

"Yes," the young man admitted.

"The next time you sit down to your desk and begin another story, bear in mind how the lowliest people manage to brighten their lives with something or other."

Krimmie thanked the editor, acknowledged he had never had such splendid advice before and pocketed his story with a promise to make the changes the great man had taken such pains in indicating on the script and to bring it back just as soon as he could. But he never called on O. Henry's savior again. . . .

Another defect in his writing was its lack of good form. This was patent even to Krimmie. There were times when he longed for the intensive training he hadn't had—at Yale or Princeton, or best of all, Harvard. "Damn it all," he would say to Lance, "I can't seem to put two sentences together that don't sound like logs bumping one another." Lance had to inveigle him, in all seriousness and faith, to take up his pencil again, a thing weighing tons after such a confession. Now and then, Krimmie felt he was in the wrong profession; that he had been cut out for music; and he longed for some conservatory to give him the elementary technique he lacked. But his chum would say, "Twaddle—there's no one writing novels like yours—not even that elephant, Dreiser. Look at *Rose Schelling!*" Yes, look at it. He had been slaving at it for three solid years, and it looked worse and worse; so bad, finally, that he destroyed it.

Fortunately, at this period, he had not given up composing things he called "moods and studies": prose poems on intimate themes, some of which concerned Tommy, and the rest, death, immortality and other symbols of a cosmic expanse. These got into a book which was published under the title, Love And

Life and Other Studies; but happily, no one in the consciousness of present-day mankind has a copy; unless Lance still has his. Contemporaneously with Love And Life, Lance published his first and only book: The Poisoned Lake and Other Poems.

This not getting out a book had been the eternal devil. The young authors put their heads together over and over at all hours, when, lo and behold, within a few days of each other, they suddenly found two willing publishers: The Grafton Press and The Broadway Publishing Company. These old New York firms were delighted with their respective volumes; wrote ecstatically about them; said they were willing, without further delay, to issue them, upon payment of a nominal sum, a mere bagatelle to cover the initial costs. In the throes of the wildest enthusiasm, both authors managed to raise the money and, after reading the beautiful galleys and the still more beautiful page-proofs—microscopically examining the sheets like misers perusing testaments—two slender volumes appeared: the one in green and gold, the other in brown and gold. And, on one of the shelves in Lance's room and one of the shelves in Krimmie's, they stood, side by side, supporting and almost embracing each other—The Poisoned Lake and Love And Life. To keep them from falling off the shelves, the new authors had carelessly surrounded their volumes with works by older authors, looking like so many colophons. Casually walking by the shelves and running one's eye along the list of authors, one might have discovered two queer names right in the more or less chronological or alphabetical midst of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton; Byron, Shelley, Keats; Emerson, Poe, Whitman.

Considerable pandemonium was added to the scene when the chums found their names in print elsewhere as well, and without paying for the privilege: in leading New York dailies, right among the book reviews. Although the anonymous reviewers

said virtually nothing, they listed the titles of the volumes and the names of the authors under the popular caption—Books Received—with the appended description: "A volume of prose paragraphs on love, life, death, immortality, etc."—"a volume of poems on love, life, death, immortality, etc." These brief notices sufficed. The two authors had arrived.

They quickly pooled their remaining funds and gave a party to their cronies—at Kiel's. And then had a private party—just Lance and Krimmie—at Siegel-Cooper's. Then Tommy gave Krimmie a party at Silsbee's—to which Lance was invited. Hers was the best of the three. She did the thing in style—from oysters, through lobster and crab meat, down to the cream of the day: Nesselrode Pudding. Was not this dish named after Baron Nesselrode, the chef who invented it for the conqueror, Napoleon Bonaparte? At any rate, Lance and Krimmie acted like conquerors at rest as they sat back luxuriously and Silsbee himself fulfilled Tommy's instructions. . . .

III

AN EDITORIAL DREAM

LANCE and Krimmie had not been at their writing tables for many years before they learned that practically every publication in that part of Christendom bounded by the Atlantic and Pacific was more or less equally regretful, very truly yours, sincerely yours or sometimes cordially yours. In desperation, the young men changed places: Lance was now writing stories and Krimmie urging his prose to be more poetical. But these shifted tactics met with the same resistance everywhere. The Poisoned Lake and Love And Life, aside from their intrinsic merits, were meant to influence a fair share of the world in the abstract and, in the concrete, to persuade editors, now that they were dealing with men who had "arrived," to take cognizance of some slightly more original excuse for returning their manuscripts. Nothing of the kind occurred. Like the cat in the famous song, back came each manuscript, just as one had almost begun to rejoice—"thought she was a goner."

This couldn't go on forever. They must do something drastic to find out the inside workings of the game. If they could only get a job on a magazine and see how it's done! With what seemed like the whole country on one side and themselves on the other, there was every reason in times of doubt for supposing that two inexperienced tyros could hardly be standing anywhere but on the wrong side. One read, now and then, a story, a poem, an essay one liked—that had been written in "this country" and published in one of "those sheets." One encountered an occasional individual, a queer apparition in *cette galère:* Edwin Arlington Robinson, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Edith Wharton.

Henry James himself got into print—though few people read him. In the earlier days of the same periodicals, or their predecessors, room had been found for the New Englanders, and Irving, Cooper, Bret Harte. Even the black sheep, Poe, and the misanthropic Melville were accepted here and there. The magazines couldn't be wrong all the time? But they must be wrong the rest of the time? How else could all those other writers, that cheap, noisy chorus of happy-enders, optimists, uplifters, prettifiers and puritans have appeared over and over again? There was still a great deal for the tyros to learn about getting a start. Perhaps a job would divulge the secret.

A few years before, Krimmie had had some experience in the matter of applying for or hinting in the direction of an apprenticeship with a prominent publishing house. Unhappily, he committed the blunder of showing a group of his apostrophes to a gentleman connected with the concern, and the gentleman responded: "The sooner, young man, you give up such idle notions and get down to brass tacks in another profession, the better for everybody concerned." The advice didn't sound funny then; but years later, when the same gentleman accepted and published one of Krimmie's books, the echo sounded extraordinarily droll. In meditating his next application, Krimmie did not intend to let Love And Life sponsor his abilities. He had begun to look askance at the thing. After the introductory ecstasies and after the Grafton Press had reported that only a certain number of copies had been sold, and Lance had disclosed a similar report from the Broadway Publishing Company, it took considerable faith or foolhardiness to keep the ecstasies alive. They died after a brief struggle, and one let them bury themselves. Besides, there were other and fresher emotions from day to day, goading inspirations that incited the authors into—"I must get at this new idea—it's absolutely marvellous—just wait till I get it down!"

Nevertheless, the longing for a job increased, and when Krimmie was told by a man of authority that he might have a chance with Harper's, it usurped his entire interest for a while. If there's a friend of young writers anywhere in America, his informant declared, it's the man who has helped so many men grow, who assisted Mark Twain most of all. In those days, Van Wyck Brooks had not yet issued his eloquent portrait, The Ordeal Of Mark Twain; otherwise, Krimmie would have stopped his well-wisher from adding: "Try William Dean Howells, the author of My Mark Twain. Write him the facts—don't be afraid—he's human! And be sure to send him a copy of Love And Life—you never can tell!" It was a difficult letter for Krimmie to write and a difficult book for him to inclose. He only accomplished the double task after many repeated revisions, innocently unconscious throughout that he might have saved himself both the labor and its accompaniment of qualms. The Dean of American Literature and Brahmin of Boston never saw the letter and the book. So, at least, wrote the caustic person who intercepted them and explained: "Mr. Howells is too busy a man to devote his time to such writings, and, from the evidence at hand, the sooner, my dear sir, you pursue something you are qualified for—" and more words to that effect. . . .

Krimmie tore up the reply, walked over to the Rice Club and played far into the small hours. He did so much brooding over the letter from Franklin Square that his game proved most ineffectual. Still, he came away from the Second Avenue chess-hive feeling comparatively cheerful. He had gone to the Rice this time, in preference to the Manhattan, because of an instinct which prompted him, whenever he felt so low he could not conceivably fall lower, to seek the society of men worse off than himself. Steeped though he was in chess as a pastime, an opiate and an income, Krimmie had detached himself sufficiently, thanks to Tommy, his writing and the

denizens of 232, to see those grubbing, groping mortals distinctly outside himself. And beholding them thus—young and old Jews who would never do anything except potter over chess—the sole kingdom they conquered and ruled till the Cuban Capablanca came along—Krimmie's self-pity vanished. He watched and listened to them all: from the brilliant young experts, Jaffe, Tenenwurzel and Bernstein, Rosen, Rosenthal and Rosenzweig, up to those patriarchs, the ironic Rabbi Berenstein, Professor Rice, the inventor of the gambit everybody busted, and the antediluvian Doctor Gold, who had composed chess problems for sixty years and would compose them until he died. And down to the swarm of "dubs and duffers" who would never get anywhere; each one a hopeless *Nebich* who schemed and blundered, disputed and indulged in the entire lexicon of vituperation, only to find himself in still another deadly mate-trap. Knowing their plight—how some stole off to Houston Street late at night, into a café whose proprietor allowed them to sleep there, on the chairs or on or under the tables—Krimmie forgot his own gloom. One of them, a little too proud for such charity, preferred Union Square Park and lay with the bums on the benches, until a cop came along, tapped the soles of his shoes and shouted at him to move on—as he dutifully recounted to the Morgue when the body was brought there and, a day or two later, was identified by some of the other duffers and saved from Potter's Field.

Krimmie—or Krimehausen—as they loved to call him ever since he had been caught playing with their idol, young Jaffe, and an old *Kibitz,* leaning over to another old *Kibitz* and whispering, loud enough for the players to hear—"Who's that young fellow playing with Jaffe?"—the other proudly retaliated—"What's the matter—you don't know who that is—that's Krimehausen!"—always felt better after going over there. Though he never won any real money, he would quietly hike back to Fourteenth Street, climb the four flights, unlock and

lock his door, undress, crawl into the warm cot and sigh fairly contentedly. As like as not, someone was due in the morning and, hearing about the letter from Harper's, would say once more, "Never mind, dear," and lure him away to Silsbee's. . . .

Lance likewise failing in the matter of a literary job, he and Krimmie debated the prospect of getting in touch with other writers. There must be others in the same wretched circumstances. Yes, there was Billy Luks for one, whom Krimmie still visited at the dispensary on Waverly Place. And Lance, always more sociable and adventurous, had run into a couple of congenial fellows, a poet and an essayist, Joyce Kilmer and Robert Cortes Holliday.

"We must cultivate them," said Lance; "they might amount to something some day—and they're fine chaps in any event. Kilmer's being accepted right now and has a job on Funk and Wagnalls' Dictionary. And Bob Holliday—he's a genius—though nobody buys his stuff, and he's older than we are."

Krimmie, very shy about meeting actual writers, one of whom was being accepted, let Lance do most of the talking. When Kilmer turned to him, read some of the apostrophes and said, "You ought to divide those lines and make them rhyme—there's poetry in them—" Krimmie glowed. And when Joyce added, "You ought to write a page or two on music for our dictionary—you know much more about that subject than I do—and I'll see that they pay you a bit—" Krimmie was stunned. But not too stunned to write the article, for which Joyce instructed the publishers to send him ten dollars. He had graduated at last and, like his mother in the case of the diplomas, wanted to frame the check and show it to everybody. But he couldn't afford to.

Down at the dispensary, Billy Luks introduced him to an Irishman who, back in the days of the Bronx, had been the idol of Adamsen, Tisch and True, because he championed the modern painters of that time, George Luks, Will Glackens,

Robert Henri, Arthur B. Davies, Ernest Lawson, and excoriated the Academicians in the columns of Mr. Dana's New York Sun. His name was Charles FitzGerald. Fitz also knew Krimmie by reputation, as a national figure in chess, and it was over a board that Billy introduced them to each other. Outside of his game, Fitz had more ideas in a moment than most people have in a month, and an imagination notable for its generosity. At the close of their lively session, the critic invited Krimmie to come up to Mouquin's "for one of our Sunday breakfasts. You'll meet some other chaps who've heard of you. We foregather at noon and sit around for hours. Don't bring your pocket-chessboard—we have pocket-chessboards of our own."

The truth of the matter was that only Fitz had a board, and only one or two cranks beside himself handled the thing at all. These few, however, were enough to ruin the Sundays of the other frequenters, whose gossip of the week was constantly disturbed by the perpetual chess-talk: Frederick James Gregg, another Irishman and also on the Sun; John Flanagan, another Irishman, not on the Sun, but an academic sculptor; Jo Davidson, not another Irishman, but a radical sculptor; and the lion of the crowd, George Luks. Any Sunday he had the price of a *Mazagran* and some delicious French rolls, which the hippopotamic Dubois brought in—the same waiter who brings them in now—Krimmie hurried to Mouquin's. From time to time he made the acquaintance of additional frequenters, none of whom supplanted Fitz in his affection. But one of them, a fine, sensitive fellow who came over from Philadelphia, not only rivalled Fitz but outlasted him. In the Mouquin days, John Cournos was the art critic of the Philadelphia Record, but in 1911—not long after Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot found America too inhospitable toward what they cared for—he went abroad, settled in London and also became a so-called expatriate.

Through chess once more, Krimmie met still another author, or rather a surgeon who had turned author and ostracized himself from the medical profession by writing and publishing a devastating diatribe entitled, Medical Chaos And Crime. Norman Barnesby was also a speculator in Wall Street and numbered among his friends the President and Vice-President of the National City Bank, Frank A. Vanderlip and Joseph T. Talbert. Krimmie met him at the Manhattan Chess Club. They took a great liking to each other, doubtless because the doctor was such a remarkably jolly personality and his chess instructor such a remarkably gloomy one. Barnesby entered upon a vigorous campaign to reform Krimmie's despondency by lifting the economic pressure that weighed him down. This was to be accomplished, speedily and lightly, by introducing him to a host of prospective pupils beginning in Wall Street and running the gamut of Fifth Avenue and Riverside Drive. "Cheer up, gloomy Gus," said the doctor one day; "we're going to start with old Talbert. Jump into the car and we'll go to the Army and Navy Club for luncheon." Krimmie crawled into the doctor's car—the first he had even ridden in—and met the first of the magnates he was to initiate in the mysteries of Caïssa. He had avoided Wall Street ever since the days he had had to mark quotations on the bulletin board in a broker's office. This new adventure, supported by Barnesby's tireless visionary projects, augured a truly wonderful future, leading, perhaps, straight on to Mecca itself. There was another reason, profounder than his economic need, which caused Krimmie to listen to his volatile friend and to follow him about at the supernatural pace to which the latter subjected him.

Just before the advent of Barnesby, a new idea had come to Krimmie, slowly and vaguely at first and with many a dark struggle on the way, but so hopefully and persuasively that it finally captured his entire attention, and he was able to say

to himself: Why not found a magazine? He was already old enough, even in such a shy retreat as his, to have met and learned to know a good deal about folk like himself. Though this one painted, that one modelled and a third used his whole weight to make an etching press lay a clear print, they were all related to himself. When they were most themselves and forgot to wear the mask they hid behind, he had seen them look exhausted and forlorn and heard them descend into hopelessness. Though they never talked tragically, but covered themselves with the American habit of chattering cheerfully at all costs, he recognized these antics as echoes of himself in similar circumstances. The most downright buffoonery they embraced leaped into the air when their hearts must have been most hollow. His feeling for them might have been termed pity or understanding, had it not been closer to loneliness or companionship in misery; and any desire to help them had in it a reflected poignancy.

Whatever the precise relation, it caused him, notwithstanding his economic condition and his state of unpreparedness, to embark on such a venture. Without consulting anyone at the start, he felt his way through the devious and elusive ramifications of planning the magazine. One positive volition manifested itself throughout his calculations: the paper should be theirs as much and his as little as possible, so that each contributor might have an individual corner unhampered by considerations of an editorial character. Subsidiary to this main scheme, various corollaries developed. He wanted the paper, by preference, to publish the work of men and women who had, as yet, no audience of their own. He wanted each contributor to kow-tow to nobody outside himself and his personal divinities. There was to be no concern with the public taste—whatever that abstract term might mean—and no thought in the direction of the advertisers, since there was to be no advertising. He hoped the paper would sell, but had,

so far, no idea as to who would buy such a thing. He was wholly ignorant about the *modus operandi* of letting people know it existed. Regardless of what might happen, he intended to print it, at least, and had asked Clark, the printer downstairs, for an estimate. For the first year, he had determined on a quarterly. This would admit plenty of time between issues for the gathering of further material; and he planned to make each issue bulky enough for the many different personalities to stretch themselves comfortably. He had also determined on a title: The American Quarterly.

Fitz and Gregg—sophisticated Dubliners to the bone—playfully derided such a name. He derided it a bit himself and chimed in with their sweeping argument: "Art must be international." He contended that no one surpassed him in his love of great foreign literature. But he maintained that great foreign literature has a superlative following in the past, present and future all over the world, whereas what there might be of great American literature has comparatively few readers anywhere. By this he didn't mean that the adjective, whether national or otherwise, counted in the long run. A man was an artist by virtue of being an artist and not because he had been born here, there or elsewhere. Racial traits and environments were bound to have their way with him and their expression through him. There might be—Krimmie even hoped there must be—such roots underneath the pavements he, for one, had been born on. He trusted that similar roots penetrated or flourished elsewhere in America: in the South, the Middle West, the Far West, down some hole or cranny few folk were aware of at present. From the evidences in the periodicals and books of the day, he had no right to despair altogether. But the despair he felt in the presence of the great majority of exhibits was infinitely heavier, more national, more universal, than that infinitesimal hope of his. But the hope persisted.

He looked so anxious and wild-eyed and enthused with such continual hoarseness that the older men finally had to humor him. For the sake of appearances, they retained one or two sly reservations in agreeing with him.

"Fools might think your dream sounds a little highfalutin," ventured Fitz. "But I don't."

"Neither do I," echoed Gregg.

But those Dubliners smiled at each other. . . .

IV

TOBOGGANING

The American Quarterly was to have no manifesto, editorial notes, book reviews. There were so many of those departments in the regular magazines and the weekly book sections of the press, one got the impression that they were more vital to the editorial purpose of the day than the works of original artists. Had Krimmie's idea come to him later, he would undoubtedly have made a strenuous bid for creative criticism. But in those days he inhabited the same darkness surrounding the other young men of the period. He had not heard of John Macy, Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Paul Rosenfeld, and the other creative critics whose writings, when he eventually encountered them, gave him the profoundest stimulus. Moreover, he was not, in the American sense of the title, an editor. There was no telling how often his taste might develop or modify. In a constant state of change, he could not commit himself to any one editorial policy. And, as he knew so little about other young writers, he had to leave himself open to every influence which might come to the surface each time he met a man he had never met before. The first issue, when he gathered it together and Clark looked it over, figured to run about two hundred pages.

Most of his friends, new or old, thought he must have gone mad. But they resisted the impulse to take him to task—as he doubtless deserved in many particulars—and contented themselves by turning their scepticism into good-natured banter. Although there would be no pay unless the magazine prospered, no one refused to contribute; and most of the promises were fulfilled. Fitz held back a little; wanted to see

the first issue before he'd commit himself; a stand he could hardly be censured for. Gregg dug out two or three pages of pointed epigrams; ladies being the victims of his wit in most instances. Bob Holliday, who went about with a discouraged look, brightened long enough to hand Krimmie a character study nobody would print at the time: some mellifluous, old-fashioned prose about a man named Nuggins, Muggens or something equally Lambian. Billy Luks, after much self-deprecation, released some of his tiny buffooneries, with the "little boy named Ben" leading the way. Brother George, who had never written a line, but had enough spare energy to try anything, wrote a Rabelaisian satire on the Academicians: Advice On How Not To Become A Painter. There were a number of ludicrous sub-titles: How not to decorate a studio; how not to spread an easel; how not to hold one's brushes; how not to stab the canvas. Gutzon Borglum wanted to write something about his friend, Colonel Roosevelt, but finally desisted, and sent in some pungent paragraphs under the caption, Chips From A Sculptor's Studio. Pulling his Oriental beard, Jo Davidson swore he had never written a line and never could—and therefore didn't write it. Lance insisted on blossoming forth as a venomous parodist and tried his ability on Longfellow in a fearfully sentimental narrative called The Old Mill. Joyce Kilmer gracefully contributed a group of short lyrics, which one may now find in his book of collected poems.

Gregg promised to interest some of his Irish compatriots in the venture; and word came back from Dublin that Lady Gregory would be glad to send in a one-act play. Krimmie, in his perpetual jaunts about town, decided that "we ought to have an actor tell us something about his profession" and cornered George Arliss in his dressing-room. That gentleman with the monocle gave him two genial hours of his time, but persisted in his whim to write an attack against vivisection.

The newspaper column Krimmie read and enjoyed more than any other in town was written by Hutchins Hapgood in The Globe. After an exchange of notes with reference to a contribution, he called on Krimmie and proved to be a stocky basso profondo with depths of enthusiasm for the quarterly. He offered the young editor some substantial advice and the entire manuscript of an autobiographical novel, David, The Story Of A Soul. This the editor excitedly announced he would issue serially. Hutch examined Krimmie's own writings and put a deliberate finger on some of the prose poems with the remark: "Here's where your future lies." Out of this encouragement, the latter decided to give himself a page in the first issue. John Cournos' nasal treble was even more enthusiastic. He not only turned in an essay, on the entrance of Russian literature into America, but promised to ask some of his friends for manuscripts. A man in Philadelphia, Charles Demuth, sent in a one-act comedy, as a result of John's propaganda, though he was and is much better known as a watercolorist second to no other American. John insisted on writing to still another Philadelphian. "You may not know his work now, but you will some day. His name is Ezra Pound." But Krimmie didn't hear from Ezra just then.

Other manuscripts joined this hodge-podge later on. For the next few months, Krimmie, when he wasn't at one of his chess clubs in the continued pursuit of his income, visited the few literary haunts he knew or had heard about. The New York of those days scarcely qualified as a city which devoted much time or space to leisure in the form, for example, of outdoor cafés. Artists craving these had to visit the purlieus of civilization, those boulevards all over the Continent. Had there been such resorts over here, Krimmie could have met many more men of his craft than he did. In 1908 or 1909, he had to make the best of the community at his disposal. Out of town, he knew nobody. He had scarcely travelled so far,

and as for being in touch, through other media of intercourse, with men like Sandburg, Anderson, Lindsay, Frost, Lewis and the many others he was to meet later on, he hadn't even heard of them. And yet, some of them were quite a little older than he and had not been seen in print.

Thus it was that Krimmie had to be his own Baedecker. People who met him for the first time must have thought him exceedingly eccentric. He was absent-minded, near-sighted and as careless about his appearance as an independent hobo. Whenever the black thread which reached from his pince-nez to his top vest-button broke, he tied the two strands in a knot and proceeded. Soon there was quite a row of these knots, and the anchor at the top of the vest had to be raised to the lapel of his jacket. But this place of security had to be sacrificed when the thread grew still heavier in knots and shorter in lengths. Then what was left of it dangled over his ear, with no anchorage at all. Many people smiled at him and, when he began the recital of his project, stumbling and often contradicting himself, exchanged puzzled glances. But Krimmie, absorbed in his scheme, would continue fanatically: "The idea is—each man is to have more or less his own say. What I mean is—there's to be no rejection because of not conforming with a preconceived policy. There's to be none of that—do you see—if I can possibly help it?" Of course, they saw, or said they saw, then shook their heads and quickly forgot about him. And Krimmie went on to the next stranger and began all over again. . . .

As to the financial department, the funds for at least the first issue, this proved far and away the most difficult of his problems. He was aware from experience that he would never do as a salesman and, at the same time, that the necessity of supporting an ideal in New York with cash required unerring instincts of salesmanship. Still, the amount he required at the start was a mere five hundred dollars. Hadn't Fitz and

Gregg told him how The Irish Players had started the famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin on a sum as small as that? "And look at the artists who've come out of that experiment: Synge, A. E., Yeats, Colum, Lady Gregory!" But five hundred dollars in Dublin, for such a purpose, were easier to raise than a similar endowment in New York. They sharply warned him not to overlook the contrast. But they didn't have to warn him. At the end of several months, he had only succeeded in raising a few subscriptions at the rate of three dollars a year. This money he deposited carefully and gratefully in one of the two white banks on Eighth Avenue and Fourteenth Street.

There were times, especially after one jaunt too many, he was so weary he had to go to bed for a day or two; and Lance, with his simple family remedies, had to nurse him. Then, refreshed and more eager than ever, Krimmie would set forth again. A month or two later, had one eyed the soles of his shoes, the baggy state of his trousers, the tobacco and coffee stains on his clothes, one might have mistaken him for a panhandler. But there was something so immediately sensitive in the way he acted if one betrayed such a thought that one had to employ the most subtle subterfuge to get him to forget the incident. And one had to be careful not to express anything symptomatic of pity or sympathy. He wanted to interest a person, if it was possible to interest him, in the thing which haunted and drove him about. That was all. . . .

Well, Krimmie finally re-entered Wall Street under the guidance of that cheerful madman, Norman Barnesby. But now, in addition to the chess instruction he was supposed to undertake, he had an idea he might be able to approach some of the magnates in behalf of the magazine, and timidly imparted the hope to the doctor. "Let that wait a bit," said the latter. "There are these two giants to start on right away—Vanderlip and Talbert. They have but one ambition at the moment: a consuming passion to play well enough to beat each

other at chess. After you've satisfied that appetite, we shall see." And, before introducing him to Mr. Talbert, Barnesby counseled Krimmie: "Don't be afraid of him. He's a Southerner of the old school."

The Vice-President of the National City Bank invited Krimmie to his hotel on a certain evening and received the bashful young man as if he were a potentate from India. The beautiful inlaid chess-table, with delicately carved box-wood figures, was ready for the attack and defence. Down the sides of the table, in parallelograms, opulent cigar-boxes reposed: Hojo de Montereys themselves. On a small tabouret nearby, a decanter of red wine and a decanter of white wine awaited the guest's preference. Old Talbert relieved him of his hat and overcoat, made him sink into the deep embrasure of an armchair and then sank into his own opposite. It appeared that the courteous host didn't even know the moves. Krimmie therefore began, carefully and clearly, to elucidate the opening mysteries. Old Talbert listened as though Socrates was present and, before the evening closed, had reverently mastered the rudiments. Then came the delicate question: "You must tell me where to send the check—and of course the fee—" and his horn-rimmed spectacles twinkled. The doctor had counseled Krimmie: "When it comes to that, don't be backward, Gus—make it five—you're worth it"—so Krimmie ventured five. "My dear sir," the host protested—while his instructor wished himself in Jericho—"five simply won't do!" Before Krimmie could substitute three, two, one, the drawling Southerner added: "I've had a wonderful time, sir, sitting here with you. So, if you don't mind, we'll call it ten. And I hope you'll be able to come once or twice a week," the old bachelor concluded, as he saw his speechless guest to the door. "There will be evenings when I shall be unaccountably detained elsewhere. I'll send you a message in time, sir, and seeing that this will upset your plans, I'd like you to feel that you hadn't

wasted your evening on my account. And so——" Krimmie would receive the check notwithstanding.

Meanwhile, the President of the bank, Mr. Vanderlip, had been too busy to begin. One late afternoon, Barnesby suddenly called for Krimmie, shot him up to the Grand Central Depot and rattled on: "We've got to be in Scarborough for dinner and after dinner you're to give us a blindfold exhibition and after that we shall see."

"But I haven't played blindfold since I was a kid," Krimmie demurred.

"That's nothing, we're all worse than dubs, and as we're all going to consult against you, the more of us there are the better for you."

A few hours later, Krimmie, sitting at one end of the salon, and holding the youngest of the Vanderlip children on his lap to divert him between moves, played the allies at the other end. The consultation committee disagreed so often about their next course of action that they usually compromised on the worst selection. Krimmie was easily able to checkmate them, which astounded and delighted them effusively. Unfortunately, the master of the house had been abruptly called to Washington and missed the opportunity of being impressed with the exhibition, as the doctor had planned. After the game, the lady of the house invited the guests outdoors, showed them the wonderful blankets of snow the heavens were spreading about, and announced: "We must go tobogganing." Krimmie, beset with pessimistic omens, had to lie down on one of the sleds, and, as he had never tried belly-woppers as a boy, the sensation didn't agree with him. The omens loomed with hallucinations of a symbolical nature. He dreaded that this tobogganing would carry off his last hope for The American Quarterly. But something much less symbolical succeeded in doing so.

Before the close of the sixth month of Krimmie's crusade,

one man, it is true, had come forward with a proposition: "There must be five men in this town who will each devote one hundred dollars quarterly to your venture. I hate to put you to the embarrassment of finding the other gentlemen. I should like to relieve you by asking you to accept the whole sum from me. But this I cannot do without stinting myself in quarters to which I am obligated: the many relatives who are dependent on me. You have a splendid dream, young man, and I fervently hope to see you bring it to fruition. Even though you fail to find those other guarantors—and it would be preposterous if you didn't—the next dream may be still finer, I for one am positive, sir." In conclusion, old Talbert optimistically contributed an article on the psychology of banking.

A month or two later, the Vice-President was still the only financier in the ring, and it was at his suggestion—advice it would have been absurd to question—that Krimmie gave up The American Quarterly, returned the subscription moneys and manuscripts he had collected—and retired to 232. The after-effects of the tireless demands he had made upon himself threw him into a temporary nervous collapse. Lance ordered him to give in for a while and relax completely.

A number of visitors came up the stairs and humored him. Clark said, better luck next time; Hartley, you tried it a little too soon; Billy Luks, who the hell cares; Roth, *Jetzt spiel a mal a Walzer, Louis;* and Tommy, never mind, dear. And the patient—who liked to fancy himself Mozart on his death-bed, with his friends gathered round chanting his own great mass —recovered. And was Krimmie once more—or rather, a slightly older, singularly a more cheerful one. Blinking up at Lance, he inquired: "Where do we go from here?" Lance grinned back—"Take this medicine first. You need cleaning out. . . ."

V

INTERMEZZO

KRIMMIE got up the next morning, ran down one flight, filled his pitcher with water, returned to his room and, standing on a newspaper to protect the floor, revelled in a sponge bath, dried himself vigorously and dressed. He then pulled up the window shade and looked out over the tenements and old red-brick houses of Thirteenth Street—one of which now contains the offices of The Dial and another of the whilom Freeman. His thought wandered beyond the buildings and into the early blue of the sky. There was one thing about living so high in the air. Nobody could interfere with the morning sun, the only element in town which gave itself freely and superabundantly. Hadley, his landlord, who let him postpone paying the rent for two or three months at a time and never dunned any of "the boys," as he called them, had assured Krimmie before he signed the lease: "Even in winter, you'll find the sun in your room." Well, there she was now and here he stood, baring his body like a desert worshipper, the while a silent hymn spread from his toes to his eyes. He could see the minarets along the horizon downtown snatch at the zenith like flames. Each year, new ones had come and reared above the rest; but they still had a distance to go to blot out the sun or filch it from his window. Especially on a day like this in the spring of the year.

He turned, took his hat and, without waking Lance or waiting for him, stole downstairs and away to Kiel's. Erna herself brought his sweet buns and coffee; and also brought Albert Ryder's. The old man peered at him and then bent down to his coffee. Krimmie peered back and reflected: There's still

quite some time ahead of me. This thought cooled him deliciously. He lifted his own cup, silently toasted Erna for the strength of this greatest of liquids, bit into a bun, blessed Kiel for its succulence, and then watched one of the truck drivers, Sam Pearson, leave the bakery. Sam, looking like a cross between a gorilla and Hackenschmidt, lifted his body onto the seat of his ice-wagon and whistled to the horses. They gradually awoke from their reveries, picked up their front hoofs and pawed about in preliminaries, forcing Sam to call lazily: "Come on now, boys—we can't stay here all day." Krimmie was reminded of the patriarch, Rabbi Berenstein, over on Second Avenue, who, whenever his king was in check, addressed him benevolently, "Come, *König*, you can't stay there all day," shoving the old cripple one square away. Sam continued to cajole the horses until they moved, one heavy step at a time, and dragged the ice-wagon away. In Krimmie's state, he fancied the wagon a stately hearse bearing the remains of a nobleman, nothing less than a Tammany chief, to their last resting place. The spring breeze, drifting through Kiel's open door and surreptitiously drenching the store, played upon his mood. He still felt the after-effects of the quarterly, but in a diminuendo carrying his imagination among hypotheses and comparisons. Whatever it was he had lost had almost assumed a foreign air. A transition, by no means sudden or complete, had taken place: he was able to eye the past as though it belonged to somebody else.

Sitting in retrospect, he was aware of things he might have lost, the fall of which would have been even more poignant than the death, still-born, of an editorial dream. An influence more soothing than the buns of the morning, or more stimulating than coffee, made him look ahead. Old Ryder may have had a part in this. Or certain people in his blood who had lost precious things and gone on. True, he had seen his parents go on to things no better than the ones they had lost; to things

even poorer, retrenchments and compromises; until they could compromise no more. Knowing what it led to, he was certain he wouldn't compromise, positive he couldn't. Let such a remedy tempt him, as it had done in the past, he would push straight through or ignore it. As he sat there he was sure of this. They had been sure of it too, in their way, especially his father; but the old man had pursued illusions. He himself would never do that. He felt himself at the point of a clear prelude which was to lead him on to——

Old Ryder disturbed him again by peering at him. Krimmie got up, tried to look oblivious, went over to the cash register, heard Kiel say good-morning, paid the little baker, forgot to answer good-morning and hurried out into the street. The warmth of the sun enveloped him and made him relax his stride. Faint clouds of steam rose gracefully as white-winged men sprinkled the gutters from the elephantine nozzles of hoses. Boys were at their games again. Tops were being twined and hurled onto the pavement where they spun in a perpetual vertigo. Marbles, from smoky realers down to clay-colored miggles and aggies, were darting across an improvised battlefield diagrammed with soft hunks of charcoal or chalk. People were nodding to each other; even nodding to strangers. A peanut machine sent up a straight jet of steam, whistling like an empty-headed urchin. And, not to be caught behind the season, the florist had decorated his window with primroses, daffodils and crocuses.

Krimmie felt rather than saw these signs. He had been seized with a tumultuous idea. Digging among the relics of the past, pouncing upon the most likely looking particles, he would compose a strictly impersonal essay. Running all the way back to his boyhood, even to the ludicrous play he had started and destroyed—True To The Last—he would pass from event to event without sparing a single detail, and finally reach the climax: the quarterly. He would write such an essay and

call it—but what should he call it? Never mind the title now; it was bound to come with the rest. He must hurry back to 232.

Was it not an artist's duty, in so far as he could, to detach himself as observer from himself as an actor; let the cooler of the two comment on the antics of the hotter as if the latter were a person totally foreign and curious? Was it not the prime distinction in one's conquest of the self to make one's incision like a surgeon and then. . . . Something interrupted Krimmie's reverie. He had reached the familiar vestibule and the long, black letter-box hanging from a nail. Should he pass it this morning—climb the stairs as if it weren't there? Many a morning a mood had been ruined by that thing on the wall. Or, after he had raised the tin flap and discovered a package inside, he had had to use up the best part of the day's energies nursing the mood back to its original liveliness.

Still, if he passed it this morning, what an acknowledgment to the editors that they had the power to drag him from his height to their commercial level merely by instructing an underling to insert a rejection slip into a bulging envelope. Had he not achieved a position so detached with regard to them that nothing they attempted could disturb his isolation or affect the freedom of his movements henceforth? Even though the point where the shoe pinched, the economic problem, lay mostly at the mercy of those people, especially now that the quarterly had fizzled, he would not permit a solitary concern in their direction to break his present mood, and behind it the renewed career he had determined upon. He lifted the flap. He could see nothing. He poked around inside with his fingers. The box was empty. Hm—that was lucky for them. On this morning of mornings, they should have sent back a manuscript. He would have shown them.

Krimmie cautiously ascended the stairs. He didn't want his friends to hear him. There must be no sight, no sound, to interrupt the high task he had to perform. It was to be, not a

Christian burial, with the mourners looking like crows and the minister droning a lugubrious falderal, but a parade of simple drolleries, tragically earnest in their intention, but in their outcome, humorous apparitions invited to dance on the ashes of the past at the behest of a courteous fellow in no wise akin to the quacks of the land of the dollar. He unlocked and locked his door, dropped his hat on the couch, sat down, drew his chair close to the table, stretched his legs, pulled a pad under him and began the essay—as if the Krimmie of former days was a pathetically amusing stranger and he himself, with respect to such a person, an omniscient spirit containing one or two of the conscious attributes of a higher deity. Blissfully unaware that some other tomorrow reflecting yesterday might find him in a character as detached from the author of the essay in process as the latter claimed to be from the author of True To The Last and Love And Life, Krimmie traced line after careful line across the surface of the smooth, agreeable paper. Suddenly, someone's knuckles began tapping at the door. Krimmie pretended not to hear the sound. He had just had another idea. In the midst of his writing, the title had arrived. He would call these memoirs, The Ashes of An Unconscious Humorist. Trying to control his excitement, he turned back to the first sheet and, right across the top, hastily scrawled the title. And Lance had to go to breakfast alone. . . .

VI

COSMIC CONSIDERATIONS

ALTHOUGH the Rice and Manhattan clubs, for the next year or two, were still his principal haunts at night, Krimmie was soon to participate in what proved to be his last tournament. He had begun to look upon chess with aversion, not alone because, as the philosopher Mendelssohn declared, "it is too much of a game to be a science and too much of a science to be a game," but because it was still the total source of his income, and he resented the help he had to accept now and then at the hands of Tommy. And chess continued to take so much out of him that he dreaded, almost hated it. Despite his many friends at the clubs, he dragged his way there less frequently and degenerated into what East Siders term a *Kibitz*, an onlooker. After so many staunch years of it, the game had grown tediously conventional. The invariable Queen's Gambit and Ruy Lopez attacks and French and Sicilian defences had been so thoroughly tested and perfected by the masters and so sedulously aped by the tyros that one had to have recourse to irregular openings for the sake of a little novelty. But the Hoboken Gambit, as Krimmie dubbed his favorite irregularity —opening with the absurd advance, P Q Kt 4—palled on him. The move had lost its whimsicality. Even the duffers employed it and, though they floundered about among the consequences, refused to return to the much safer haven of the classics. And so, "the latest thing" rapidly joined the oldest in the breeding of an inescapable monotony.

Most of all, the ambition to rise in the demesne of Caïssa no longer appealed to Krimmie. A good part of the way from childhood, he had seen visions of himself sitting down near the

head of the procession in time and, after carrying off first honors in an international tourney in Budapest or Moscow, challenging Emanuel Lasker for the undisputed championship of the world. The inglorious defeat in such an event he now resigned to others—the French, German and American champions, Janowski, Tarrasch and Marshall—and the incredible victory to José Capablanca, the smiling *enfant terrible* who, at the close of the late war, dragged the conqueror of Steinitz out of retirement and overwhelmed him down in Havana. In the earlier days, as far back as his late teens, Krimmie had met Dr. Lasker—but not over the board. The small, dark German-Jew, with his passion for the advancement of chess everywhere, had honored the lad by undertaking several trips to the Bronx to help him found the Bronx Chess Club. Krimmie never forgot this courtesy; nor the champion's favorite remark: "If you see a good move, don't make it—look for a better one." Idling about the now dreary rooms of the Rice and Manhattan clubs, he recalled the axiom and finally applied it to the game he had followed for nearly twenty years. Chess was no longer the best move on the board; nor was it even a good one. . . .

He began spending more of his evenings at home. The green lamp on his table illumined one book after another totally foreign to the world of chess or, for that matter, to any other world of which he was specifically conscious. In the heart of the surrounding darkness, the room at the top of 232 was a serene island where he made the acquaintance of hermits from all parts of the earth, listened reverently to what they had to say, followed their monologues through the undulating tides of human speech. Most of these men came from over the Atlantic: England, France, Spain, Germany, Scandinavia, Russia; and a few from over the Pacific: especially China and Persia. Some of them returned from ages spread in dust many centuries old; a recrudescence of ghosts more compelling than, with a handful of exceptions, any of his contemporaries. As

far as his faculties were able to penetrate the pages of a book, he gave himself to these men, and then reflected on the contact, carried away by the essence of a given adventure. What he brought to the contact had as much to do with the benefit to be derived as what they brought. Whenever he brought but a part of himself, he did not come away with much of a lifelong treasure. As a result of such carelessness or incapacity, by no means infrequent, he concentrated the harder, until he developed into an instrument broad enough to respond to more and more of the gradations of the speech which played upon him. In his growing catholicity, he tried to walk around a book as one might around sculpture, and constantly to examine himself as well as the object before him. Whenever he caught himself hastily condemning an author, or heard others do so, he reflected that people who look for their own opinions in books shouldn't read them but write them. There were times without number, however, when Krimmie fell short of the art of reading he set up for himself.

He served an apprenticeship to the great ones in literature similar to his worship of the great ones in music; but in view of the profounder antiquity of literature, his progress was infinitely slower. No matter where it came from, music never required the crutch of translation to bring it closer. Krimmie's general linguistic deficiencies handicapped him in nearly all directions and deprived him of the key to any thorough understanding of the ancient writers. Most of the Greeks and Latins left him cold; and he was unequal, as a rule, to the sustained demands of the cosmic utterances of later periods. And, whereas he preferred the classics to the romantics in music, he usually preferred the romantics to the classics in literature. Impersonal epics made him feel small, lonely, ineffectual. Try as he would, he was still too inexperienced cheerfully to greet the divine fact so many great writers assured him of: that, on the back of nature, he was less than a microbe. Such concepts

stunted his pride and ambition, froze his activities. Having lived the whole of his life in New York, perspectives and his place among them were beyond him. He therefore found the more personal figures in literature nearer his affections. In most instances, the minor poets exerted a warmer appeal than the major. They were much closer to his earth and more intimate in their soaring. Without attempting to classify his predilections, he felt more at ease with Shelley or Keats than with Milton or Homer; with Heine or Hafiz than with Lessing or Firdusi; with Horace or Catullus than with Virgil or Lucretius. Chekhov delighted him more than Tolstoy; Aristophanes than Æschylus, Sophocles or Euripides; Verlaine than Racine; Leopardi than Dante. The lyric vein generally carried him farther than the grand manner. Tireless flights were a particular weariness to him—unless Shakespeare was the speaker; or Cervantes; or Goethe. These three giants overtopped all the lyrists.

There were others he read for the first time at that lamp and cherished ever after: Molière, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Hardy, Dostoievsky, Turgenev, Browning, Synge, Sterne, Fielding, Balzac, Flaubert, Anatole France. His sessions were as unsystematic as this diversified list. Conscious education, improving the mind scientifically—these were outside his thought. He read for the mood and the joy of the thing. Among Americans, although he had loved Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, these affections faded when Walt Whitman came. Walt appealed to him as the first original, the one true democrat and cosmopolitan on American soil. He alone loomed high. There were other Americans to come, but when they arrived, intimate though many of them made themselves—because of a mutual contemporaneity of flesh and spirit—none of them ever approached the great, gray Walt. "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking," no other American emerged with so passionate a stride, such enchantment of song, so powerful a reality of

vision, or with an individuality radiating all the points of the human circumference. . . .

Krimmie rarely drew comparisons among authors. The acumen for eliciting definite categories and deducing painstaking finalities of judgment was one he admired but did not wish to emulate. He could have demonstrated why and how Dante was the superior of Leopardi and shown that by reversing the above order of his predilections he would have approximated the ideal student of letters. But the task would have irritated him. The sharp division of men into classics and romantics, terms he often discovered to be interchangeable, he could not abide even when they were employed by artists to whom he bowed in utter respect. Goethe himself had written: "I call the classical *healthy*, and the romantic *sickly*. . . . The works of the day are romantic, not because they are new, but because they are weak, ailing, or sickly. Ancient works are classical not because they are old, but because they are powerful, fresh, and healthy." The young apprentice resented such generalities; they smacked somewhat of the pedagogue and smelt suspiciously like the condemnations of "the works of the day" he was to meet in his own generation and country. For him, Goethe, on that occasion, behaved like an admonishing grandfather. *Der Alte* had evidently forgotten the manuscript with which, in his early twenties, he had made his entry into the select circles of Weimar: a tremendously romantic affair, "powerful, fresh and healthy," the first draft of Faust. Krimmie grappled with the paradox: "How can that demigod err against youth?" Unable to answer the question, he turned to some lyrics by Heine as an antidote. . . .

Another fundamental consideration influenced his reading at this time. The civilization to which he belonged by birth and experience, and to which he had hoped to devote the aims of the quarterly, was a painfully youthful one. The heartrending doubt arose that it had not achieved civilization, certainly not

in the mass. That it had not reared a genuine youth of its own, in the form of an autochthonous folk poetry, folk music, folk dance, without which foundations no cultural life in its most beautiful connotations and lasting influences can possibly emerge. The roots the country grew out of were still being transplanted from Europe—always with that incongruous exception, old Walt. But what did old Walt mean to his countrymen at the time Krimmie first opened the Leaves? He was debarred from the schools, scorned by the wiseacres, held up to anathema in the literary columns and, if read at all, hidden in private closets, along with hell-bound editions of Rabelais, Boccaccio and Casanova. The very schools he should have been permitted to serve first of all, the youths who should have been the ones to bathe and glory in him, the future to which he dedicated the most inspired of his energies—all these were barred against the one American classic. In a flood of sorrow, Krimmie reflected: Who among the masses he particularly addressed himself to ever touches him? Who among them all, down to the ostracized and fallen, ever includes this huge pagan, with his "Not till the sun exclude you, do I exclude you. . . ."

That graceful Frenchman, Sainte-Beuve, a lesser genius than Goethe, but a subtler critic, had written the delectable line: "The Greeks, by peculiar good fortune and natural enlightenment of mind, had no classics but themselves." Here was something for the young man to ponder and apply to later ages and countries and to bring home to his own generation and the plight in which it lay. It was a generation without leaders, and, in the absence of a close-knitting commonalty of inheritance, it did not seem able to substitute anything apprehending a group spirit. The little it might have salvaged from its earliest forbears in an impassioned practice and development of the arts of liberty, for which those extraordinary men had laid the cornerstone, had already been compromised, mutilated

and destroyed by men equally extraordinary in seizing those liberties, promoting an oligarchy amongst themselves and enslaving the rest of the race so speedily and successfully as to prove that the race itself was an easily malleable mass throughout. Somewhere in the dark, in a hole, in solitude, one had to plan the manufacture of new weapons for the overthrow of this new tyranny: a tyranny even more complex, powerful and far-reaching than the original one overseas; and exploiting the very weapons which had severed the tentacles of the mother island.

One felt this operative oppression nowhere more keenly than in the domain of the printed page: a page so reflective of the tastes and tendencies of the race. The panorama was dedicated to the emulation of the materialism of the successful, and to an abject prostration before these new rulers. There was hardly one periodical or daily in the land which did not, in some clever guise or other, foster this cult; at the same time annihilating, simply through the process of ignoring it, every manifestation to the contrary. The young man at the lamp was not the only outsider. He had already met a few others who dreamed of campaigns of action, but employed a language so tentative that they had great difficulty in communicating their inmost thought with the requisite passion and clarity. Like himself, they were gropers; could only learn through blundering; and for guidance, in the face of the poverty of their cultural inheritance, had to light similar lamps and examine foreign civilizations all the way back to the book of Moses. They haunted these ancient cells, warmed themselves at the secret fires which no careless accidents of time had as yet been able to subdue. Time, ages, dust, recrudescence, posterity—they studied these vast, imponderable realities, and marvelled at the superhuman way that curious, posthumous men had dug among the ruins of the past and unearthed and continued to unearth the immemorial relics of their forerunners. In the realm of science, literature, discovery, invention, music,

architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion, the great ones had been preserved by the colossal love and heroic industry of succeeding generations. At the feet of Egypt, India, China, Persia, Palestine, Greece, Rome, what was this new America? Why be discouraged or impatient with a child?

This conclusion was a somewhat dreary consolation to the youths and young men at the lamps. Dreary, too, were the effects of some of the wisdom they had to accept, and the vague, ambitious alternatives they longed for. Had I been born in the Florence of the Medicis, the London of Elizabeth, the Paris of Louis Quatorze, instead of the New York of Pierpont Morgan—such were the wistful whims which attacked them. Until some sly spirit would goad them: "Why not be to New York what Goethe was to Weimar, Shakespeare to London, Dante to Florence, Plato to Athens?" The young men would shut their books, shake their heads in despair and furtively ask themselves the inevitable question: Who am I that I should be the one?

At such a moment, Krimmie's heart beat with a phenomenal rapidity. He was not too old to dare such a question, but he was still too young to answer it. Still, even here, in the midst of so happily tempting an illusion, a note of mockery would intervene, or a line or two of ironic sophistry: the speech, for example, of Browning's old Bishop Blougram, sitting comfortably in Rome, sipping his wine and reciting:

> "See the world
> Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
> I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
> Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else."

Damn the bishop, and damn Browning—whom he loved more than any other English modern. Old Blougram, living in affluence, with lazy ideas of becoming the Pope and sunning

or shading himself in the gardens of the Vatican, could afford to "take it as it is." It was a different world over here, and different to each one inhabiting it. Each had to see it according to his own temperament and circumstance. Had I the implements right now, Krimmie argued, for the unmaking of some of the ingredients in me and the modelling of the remainder closer to the comfortable bishop's, I too could readily "mean to take it as it is." But those who composed me unwittingly dropped in just those ingredients which make it impossible for me either to see or enjoy, worship or copy, such a world. Like so many others before him, he actually said to himself: I mean to try my hand at changing the world a little. I mean to try, he said, turning down the wick, blowing out the lamp, undressing and going to bed. Whatever I happen to be, I intend to give to this one vision. I'll give myself to that and then—if they won't have it—let darkness come and take what's left of me. . . .

Someone came, sat down at his bedside, laid a hand on his brow and said: Never mind, dear. But I do mind, he answered —and woke up. There was no one in the room. He turned over on his right side, since sleeping on the left made him dream, and tried to go to sleep again. To do this he had to revert to his favorite opiate: playing both sides of a game of blindfold chess. Although the knights had a horrible habit of jumping about in crooked obliques and confusing the issue, this game without an opponent lulled him. When the morning sun came and touched his pillow, Krimmie was still asleep. . . .

VII

OLD FORMS AND NEW

ANYONE could see that Krimmie was headed in the wrong direction as far as success, or even moderate success, was concerned. Except for one more struggle ahead, a book called Arthur, he had given up the writing of novels and short stories. It was apparently the most suicidal decision imaginable. True, his first novel, Rose Schelling, before he destroyed it, had nestled a year and a half in one publisher's office and nearly a year in another. But he should have held on to it, practical people admonished him, even though his disgust with the crudities of the writing overwhelmed him. Still, how was he to foresee that the "realistic" novel, the gloomier the better, was to take an eventual hold on so many readers and publishers? How was he to feel, in the days of sweetness and light, that shop girls, farm girls and street girls were to be the inevitable heroines of fiction? Otherwise, he might have preserved the direct descendants of Rose, short stories faithfully attempting morbidezza of people east of Third Avenue and south of Canal Street. But he found these transcriptions as heavy and dull as the three-year record of Rose, "who worked in a department store." It was only too manifest that all this writing lacked originality; it was untrue to himself and untrue to its unconscious models, Dostoievsky, Gorky, Balzac, Dickens.

There was more and more of a song inside him, but these stories didn't sing. There was more and more of a recurrent beat: rhythmic patterns akin to music stirring a type of equivalent language. But his prose poems refused to move. They

were irresolute; stuck to the paper; had no legs and feet. When he read them aloud, he had to drag them along. Even so, like Hutch Hapgood, he preferred the prose poems to the stories. They were more closely related to himself, freer of foreign dictation. If he could get these things to move, this was the direction for him henceforth. Perhaps, if he began to divide the lines, in accordance with the cadences of speech, songs would evolve. He might employ a technical notation somewhat related to the mathematical system of a musical score: so many notes or syllables in the first measure or line, and similar divisions down the column. There would be whole tones, halves, quarters, eighths, rests and so on; and *tempi* in accordance with the movement of the mood, *tempi rubati.* He must be careful to resist a slavish imitation of music; and not fall between the stools of music and literature. The expression of a mood must be as natural as breathing; a matter of homogeneous speech throughout; a form *per se,* devoid of theories and other explanatory excrescences.

The courteous Kilmer, the only "successful" poet he knew, was now an honored member of the Poetry Society of America and a respected critic of verse on the Times Book Review and the Literary Digest. Krimmie decided to show Joyce his first experiments and to consult him about the prospects involved in such a trend. The author of Trees teased him about his uneven lines; said they're all right as far as they go, but why not go farther? Metre and rhyme had been good enough for the masters? Lance seconded the motion, and for the first time he and Krimmie disagreed on fundamentals. The latter had no argument aganist metre and rhyme, nor did he attempt one; but he had an impulse or intuition, which he expressed rather vaguely, that there was something he had to say which it was his business to find his own form for.

"The point is," Joyce demurred genially, "that you can be yourself without breaking with the past. Didn't Shakespeare

fit the sonnet to himself, Shelley the lyric, Keats the ode, Swinburne the ballade?"

Krimmie nodded with reference to the masters and shook his head with reference to himself. Joyce and Lance smiled at each other. The former returned to the attack.

"If it's poetry you wish to write, why not say so?"

"I don't know whether it is—poetry," Krimmie hesitated.

"He's been reading too many Leaves Of Grass," Lance expostulated.

"I've been trying Browning lately," the accused defended himself.

"Well?" demanded Joyce and "well?" echoed Lance. "Doesn't he rhyme?" and "doesn't he use feet?"

"Yes," Krimmie faltered, "but there's something so free of bookishness in Browning, something so human, so personal——"

"Browning's an egotist dangerous to follow," Joyce warned him.

"He's been listening to too much Debussy," Lance tried to explain.

"And these other new-fangled iconoclasts," Joyce deduced knowingly. "You ought to come to a meeting of the Poetry Society," he concluded. "They'll cure this disease for you."

"All right," Krimmie resigned himself. . . .

They did cure him, but not in the fashion the solicitous Joyce had intended. It was Krimmie's first, and almost his last, experience with a literary fraternity. He was attracted to some of the poets present; took a genuine fancy to one or two; especially the author of The Man With The Hoe. But the general tone of the place chilled him dismally. A sort of game was in the air; an exchange of amenities prefiguring the type of literary politics he was to encounter and flee from over and over again in a later New York. His first sight of it, here in this long, cold gallery of the National Arts Club, disheart-

ened him. The steady parade of so much respectability, so many superficial evidences of a smug, material success, aggravated his shyness and drove him still deeper into his loneliness. Most of the poets wore evening dress; it seemed incongruous in the light of what he had anticipated. Most of them carried what is called intellectual grace; employed an impersonal nonchalance in their intercourse; it seemed inhuman. And there was an element of snobbish cliquery, a back-scratching *Sängerbund* which puzzled and thwarted him. In the discussions following the reading aloud of anonymous poems, most of the voices were guardedly raised for and against theories of technique, and the sounds, as it were, emanated from the top of the head, rather than the throat, the lungs, the heart. Diplomacy subdued the passions; considerations for the social effect hid the personal viewpoint. Krimmie sat in the background, shivering.

There were several men and women who arose whom he knew by reputation. As he sat there, he was oblivious of the ironic fate the future held in store: some of these strangers were to grow into friends or acquaintances and, in one or two instances, self-appointed enemies. As he listened to them, he was conscious solely of their imperturbable fluency. It was uncanny that they talked so evenly, without the slightest slip of the tongue to betray they had emotions somewhere. The whole affair was as smooth as one of Mr. Howells' editorials in Harper's, one of the papers in The Atlantic Monthly, one of the sermons of Henry Van Dyke. Some of the speakers had fine, youthful faces, but they acted like arrived dignitaries, with the arid self-importance of academic graybeards.

Joyce had counselled him beforehand, with the kindliest inflection, that if he ever wrote poetry in earnest, and these people liked him and elected him to membership, they would help him immeasurably. There was no other society of the

kind in America; but it was destined to exert an influence throughout all the states of the Union by becoming an academy to which future poetry societies would be subsidiary and thankful. A good deal of Joyce's prophecy came true some time before his death in the Argonne.

Before the meeting in the Arts Club, Krimmie had given Kilmer his most grateful attention. But shortly after he left the assemblage, and without intending to offend his friend, he committed an unforgivable *faux pas*. He wrote a satire on the society under the caption, Rhymesters De Luxe, and allowed it to appear as a full-page spread in a sporting sheet: The Morning Telegraph. He not only lost the regard of Joyce (a loss he regretted keenly) but, as the poet informed him, he had debarred himself for all time from membership in the society. In this respect, Joyce's prophecy was not fulfilled. A few years ago, without applying for membership, or without the intention of applying, Krimmie suddenly received a courteous card apprising him that "at our last meeting," he had been elected to the society. Partly in the affectionate memory of Joyce, who would have joined him in smiling at the irony of the situation, and partly because of a friendly feeling toward the new President, Witter Bynner, doubtless the instigator of the proceeding, Krimmie accepted. But he only attended two or three meetings. . . .

Meanwhile, anyone could see that if the young author persisted in dividing the lines of his writing, he would run afoul of continued rejection everywhere. Even though he didn't call them poetry, they would never penetrate the pages of magazines. On the face of it, they looked like poems without metre and rhyme, and as such poems which passed the editorial gates had to be devoted to metre and rhyme in restricted packages or "fillers," these illegitimate mixtures of Krimmie's had no chance at all. Anyone with the most primary instinct for

economics could have calculated that such an experiment, far from being a step forward from what he had tried before, would be many steps backward. He would never escape chess that way. And Tommy and he would have to wait still longer than they had waited already: nearly eight years.

Krimmie could afford to wait a little longer. He was only twenty-eight. But Tommy—said with a smile when her next birthday came along: "I'm going to start counting the other way." He tried to smile back. Although she gave the impression she took the game as a comedy, her secret trips downtown, still coming with eagerness but leaving more and more silently, had done a thing or two to her black hair. Even Krimmie saw this one day. She deprecated his anxiety for her; asserted that the same thing had happened to her father —while he was still young—and—she knew the art of hairdressing. He tried to forget about it—and succeeded for a while. But the next time an unhappy spell overtook them, spells which came more and more often, and, as they sat together, eying the wreck of some promise the day before had beckoned them to, and endeavoring to help each other belittle it and turn to the morrow once more, he remembered and fell into a morbid silence. Tommy gently derided such a mood, or playfully tried to, and closed on the inevitable cadence: "What difference does it make?" He turned to her, as soon as he was able to look at her, and said—"None at all, dear."

But it did make a difference—after she left. Not toward her, but himself. He wanted to drop writing altogether. It was the greatest curse on earth in his case. No one but a blind, heartless egotist would keep it up. And no one, in like circumstances, but a man of sheer genius had a license to continue. Let such a rare spirit sacrifice the beloved to his mission—a standing slogan among art circles—it was right, in the highest analysis, and every other consideration wrong. What had he

himself ever produced to prove, even to his private ego, that he possessed so much as the slightest talent? He had an abnormal persistence in the face of material defeat which fools might have called courage. It was the sort of obstinacy which helped him in chess, but of what use was such a weapon in literature when one hadn't the essential qualifications in that direction: a thorough education, systematic training, sophisticated criticism, any guidance whatever?

The very next morning, his bitter resolve to stop writing vanished. The activities of the creative impulse had inoculated him against any mood by freely letting the emotion flow and catching it in the mold of expression. He had had enough experience with tragic moments to recognize that the deeper the wound the surer the possibility of a beauty perfectly congealed. The process was by no means so methodical. But as he sat down, caught up in the haste of a feverish inspiration, he could feel the first agonies swiftly pass and the first slow joys take their place. He worked with a frenzied intensity and a desperate *tempo* and then, gradually, as the things inside him cooled off and those on paper assumed their quasi-final shape, sat up in his chair once more. Read in detachment, it was down—absolutely. There might be one or two necessary minor changes tomorrow, when Tommy was due again and he read it aloud. He would hear it in perspective, while she heard it for the first time. They would discover the flaws together. But no—this one he mustn't read to her.

He pushed it away, got up from the table and began to pace the floor. The things inside him started all over again. He seized his hat, turned his back on the room, locked the door and hurried down the stairs, the things throbbing to the rhythm of his step. It was a cool, caressing day, the kind he loved best of all. But no matter how fast he walked or slowed down, the haunting beat kept pace with him. The beginnings of still another song formulated themselves, but he bluntly refused to

listen. Then the opening lines of one of Heine's lyrics suddenly raised themselves in time with his step,

"Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen
Mach' ich die kleinen Lieder."

He felt he must run, escape. But which way? No matter where, he would only encounter reminders. Without looking up, he crossed Seventh Avenue and narrowly escaped being struck by a passing ice-wagon. The driver laughed and shouted "hello." But Krimmie didn't respond and Sam Pearson whistled to the horses. Just as he reached the opposite curb, someone else stopped him—with a touch on the arm.

"Hello," he said in amazement. "What are *you* doing here?"

"On my way to you, of course."

"But I thought——"

"I know—but I couldn't wait till tomorrow. Do you mind?"

"Mind?"

His voice broke with joy. He quickly left Tommy and returned to the studio, looking as if the very mischief were behind him. A little later, she joined him.

They still had to be careful not to be seen entering the building together. But they were too happy just then for such a thought. And so complete was their forgetfulness that Krimmie read the song he had intended to hide from her. Tommy listened silently. . . .

VIII

HOUSING THE MODERNS

KRIMMIE began to see that if he showed a persistent predilection for "these moderns," a silent ostracism would operate against him mechanically. His experience at the Poetry Society demonstrated that if he ever expected to improve his condition, he could do so only by knocking at the powerful portals of conservative circles. They were the sole entrée to success in America, each "s" alluringly crossed with the sign of the dollar. Despite his poignant need and the growing danger with which it threatened Tommy and himself, he shuddered at those circles and shunned them. That business enterprise should have permeated and directed material America was natural and wholesome, no doubt; but that it should have stolen into spiritual America and contaminated nearly everyone concerned with creative expression—this was loathsome. To his horror, he had met a number of artists who had been thrust or let themselves fall into the pit of compromise: an unending host, in the course of events, composed of pathetic people the world dubbed hack writers and commercial artists. They were caught in a trap he did not dread in his own case. But the constant spectre of the thing opening up and engulfing men he had believed in drove him closer to the rest of the thin rank he belonged to. He had not as yet the strength at all times to walk the streets alone. Possibly, his affection for people handicapped him. Or that part of it which craved a return. He continued to go arm-in-arm with his fellows. And like them, to commune with the masters and to share this enthusiasm in the steady light of a daily testament.

As if Whitman and Browning in poetry, the Russians in

prose, the Scandinavians in the theatre, and Debussy and d'Indy in music, were not enough, Krimmie had turned to modern painters and sculptors as well: Cézanne, Matisse, Brancusi, and, worst of all, Picasso. In this latest adventure, Marsden Hartley was indirectly responsible. Wearing a fresh gardenia and swinging a silver-headed cane, the painter-poet had conducted him to a certain round table in the dining-room of the Prince George Hotel. Marsden had not fallen heir to a legacy; he had merely invited Krimmie to be one of the noon-day guests of a gentleman he was to meet for the first time. Well, there they were, carelessly grouped about the table: not only Marsden and Krimmie, but several other painters who, along with the man from Maine, were destined to play leading parts in the revolution of American art: Max Weber, John Marin, Arthur Dove, A. Walkowitz and Eduard Steichen (Carl Sandburg's brother-in-law). Several other *habitués* were present: Charles Caffin, the gentlemanly art critic, Marius De Zayas, the uncanny Mexican caricaturist, Paul Strand, the moody photographer, and Paul Haviland, a dreamer in ceramics. If any man was absent, he was sure to be there some other noon, or at a similar table in the Holland House whenever their host chose that place for a change. The absentee would have learned of it later, bandied about fraternally: the characteristic scene Krimmie witnessed shortly after his introduction to the group.

There was another party in the dining-room, stiffly arranged along an oblong table a few aisles beyond the round table. The two groups had a number of points in common. The man at the head of the long table and a man in the midst of the artists did most of the talking. Both men were the respective hosts, wore glasses, had high voices and expressed themselves with dynamic intensity. But one could hear the artists' host only at the table to which he addressed himself; the tireless remarks of the other host travelled all over the room. And

what the former had to say referred simply to art and artists; the latter's rhetorical monologue embraced politicians and politics. And while the one used the pronoun of the second person a good deal, the other seemed unable to dispense with the pronoun of the first.

"Is there no way of shutting off that draught?" the artists' host exploded. "The Colonel blows like an east wind."

Walkowitz, scowling like a miniature Beethoven, deferentially changed seats with the nervous dynamo, so that his back might protect him against the Colonel. But there was no escaping the gale of words through such a naïve expedient. "I resign," came the final protest. "Let's go back to 291."

Arthur Dove, as blond and bland as a Swede, drawled: "You'll never run for President, Stieglitz."

"Not against Roosevelt!" Stieglitz retorted.

Laughing among themselves, the artists arose, while their host attended to the waiter. Then, with Steichen and Walkowitz in advance, they started down Fifth Avenue. People stopped and stared at the parade of men so dissimilar, chatting, fooling and calling to one another: Steichen, lanky and boyish, Walkowitz, diminutive and dignified, Caffin, erect, aristocratic, Weber, volatile, gesticulating, Marin, with his long lean face and roving dark eyes, Hartley, with the aloofness of Hamlet, the stocky mercurial Strand, the stocky genial Dove, the grave, silent Haviland, the quick-witted, sharp-faced De Zayas, and, bringing up the rear, the nervous dynamo in gray putting friendly questions to an evasive young man in blue. But for these questions, Krimmie might have been more conscious of the inquisitive looks of the crowd. Stieglitz had begun to ask him about his work, and he was busy trying to formulate answers. "You must come up with us," the photographer concluded as they approached a narrow doorway with a round sign overhead. Krimmie thanked him and followed the others.

Again breaking into pairs, because the elevator was the tiniest in town, the men were lifted to 291. Krimmie's attention was immediately attracted by a curious object lying in state on a small table in a small, square room hung with drawings by Rodin. Marin, stroking his face with long, lean gestures, sepulchrally explained to him that the nest had been caught by Steichen at a time when the hornets were absent.

If the gallery needed a nom-de-guerre it might justifiably have claimed this symbol; but it was known as The Photo-Secession, only to have the title thrust into obscurity by the much more popular 291. It was the address on Fifth Avenue to which one often referred in answer to the demand: Where are you going? And one added cordially: Come along and see the Cézannes, Matisses, Brancusis, Picassos, Picabias. Or the Marins, Webers, Walkowitzes, Hartleys, O'Keeffes. As there were no exhibitions of his photographs, one didn't say, the Stieglitzes. But one did say, Stieglitz. These two syllables described and represented the perennial inspiration of the haunt. And today, in Paris itself, when one says 292, one does not mean solely the gallery and magazine Francis Picabia inaugurated as an offshoot and carrying on of 291. One likewise means Alfred Stieglitz. The two square rooms on Fifth Avenue are gone; the noon-day haunts in the Holland House and the Prince George are gone; and later, when the war came, depleted Stieglitz and destroyed 291, and he asked his friends to the Automat, even this final upholder of a courteous tradition disappeared. But the spirit of 291 remains. . . .

To Krimmie, among others, the gallery appealed as the one place in town for the study of the birth, development and tendencies of modern art. He gradually learned that the lines of painting and sculpture complemented the lines of music and poetry; that, without drawing needless parallels, one could readily trace a relationship proving that many artists of the age, no matter what their medium, were seeking similar funda-

mentals and evolving individual forms. One did not have to be a painter to feel at home in the gallery. Furthermore, when a mood of discouragement obsessed him, there was now a way of getting rid of it: one took it to 291. The camaraderie among the *habitués,* the extraordinary animation of the discussions, in which Stieglitz was usually the ringleader, dispersed any private vexation. After coming away from these gatherings, Krimmie was often assailed with the wistful notion that if the young literary men of the town had a haunt like this one, something in the nature of a concerted movement might at last be born among them, in the course of whose development each man would find himself. He was positive that many of the writers who had lost their way or capitulated might have been saved by a similar hole up two flights of stairs. He did not delude himself into supposing that creative work is produced as a result of the congregation of men in sympathetic groups or in cliques sprouting mutual admiration. History had taught him that your true artist is a hermit; works his way out of the self in an active solitude.

On the other hand, he was aware that there is a certain formative period when a young man, especially in a youthful environment, has to feel, occasionally at least, that his activities are expressive of something beyond mere ego-diagnosis; that what he is attempting in the dark has in it the power of communication. But even this energy is futile unless it reach consummation through the response of a number of intelligent recipients. Under the commercial régime, there was little or no outlet for a man who had many a reason to fear he was nothing but a valueless entity dabbling with solitaire. He had to relate his effort to some definite contact and therefore haunted any place where he might meet his kin in the other arts. Stieglitz, by quietly shoving his camera into the background, had created such a nook, and anyone was welcome to it, even though his work was never exhibited on the walls.

It was there Krimmie met additional artists who were to influence him later on: Charles Demuth, the Zorachs, Samuel Halpert, Man Ray, MacDonald Wright. Though most of these painters were never "hung" in 291, he eventually saw and followed their work in the principal descendant of the hornets' nest: The Daniel Gallery. This luxurious haunt was founded by a Ninth Avenue saloonkeeper who, after periodic visits of a mysterious character to 291 and an occasional purchase, always in the best of taste, of various paintings and drawings, suddenly nailed up a shingle on West Forty-seventh Street and used his romantic collection as the nucleus of his first exhibition: an American representation throughout. The gallery is still there, and so is the man who acted as Daniel's assistant from the outset: Alanson Hartpence, better known as Lance. . . .

As a result of his experience with the Poetry Society on one side and 291 on the other, and his cogitations in general as he walked the streets of New York, Krimmie had a dream even more extravagant than The American Quarterly. With that experiment and its downfall still fresh in mind, he did not confide his fantasy to anyone, not even to Stieglitz; but communed with himself in the following terms: Why can't one find an old rookery somewhere in town—an antiquated stable off the beaten tracks of Broadway and Fifth Avenue—rent it at the lowest rate, renovate it unobtrusively, throw it open to the new fellows in all the arts and give them a hole in which to test their experiments? He knew that the Broadway theatres, Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera House, the magazines, the galleries outside of 291, were rigidly blocked against experiment. How, most of all, was a playwright or a composer to realize the strength and detect the weaknesses in his script until it enjoyed the advantages of a rigorous test in rehearsal? Some old barn, somewhere in obscurity. But who was to pay

for the rent, the remodelling, the upkeep? Certainly not himself in his present economic condition.

And yet, without such an Abbey Theatre, a Yellow Book, a 291, how was anyone to begin, develop, achieve, contribute something? The idea must not degenerate into a millionaires' playtoy, like that monstrous absurdity, The New Theatre; nor a beggar's paradise, nor a place for artists to air their jealousies. It must be as simple and practical as a house, without ornamentation, charity or compromise. But where was the initial modest sum to come from? And how, at the same time, did he intend to raise eighteen dollars, call on his patient landlord and wipe out the present three months' arrears in the rental of a single room? Better begin thinking of that instead of a building for the whole world of art. Better begin acting, instead of thinking, about a house for two, an apartment, a flat. Better begin looking for a job again. If he listened to wild schemes much longer, he would lose the most precious reality he had ever known.

He didn't drop the new dream. Nor did he tell Tommy about it. He decided to postpone it for a while. It was bound to come up again when the time was more propitious. But it didn't come up again for five or six years.

Krimmie shook it off, surreptitiously began to consult want ads, called at one or two offices and was politely rejected. But he didn't have to look for a job. The job came to him. . . .

IX

THE MANDOLUTE

At the Manhattan Chess Club, Krimmie had met a long-legged, round-shouldered, bespectacled scarecrow from a small town in Indiana. Franklin Hopkins was an organist and song-writer by profession—"I write classical songs, not popular"—and a fanatic on every conceivable type of reform, not alone in the musical world, but in Wall Street as well. He had written several unpublished polemics against the maleficent influence of the most criminal canyon on earth, denouncing it as the main artery which disseminates the secret poison which has stolen down to Washington and demoralized the whole body politic, and pointing to the simple remedy that to relieve America of her superabundant diseases, one must go straight to the heart of Wall Street. Having fallen heir back home to a fortune in the modest neighborhood of thirty thousand dollars, he had descended on New York and already laid one or two pinches of dynamite. Krimmie, blinking at the campaign Hopkins had set himself, read one or two of the articles and shook his head. Not at the articles so much as the reception they were likely to receive downtown. However, there was no discouraging this crank from the Middle West, so Krimmie, after expressing his admiration for the writing itself, said no more. Besides, Hopkins had other schemes to which he was asked to listen before drawing hasty conclusions. Krimmie avowed he wasn't given to hasty conclusions, to which Hopkins responded: "You're just the man I'm looking for." Krimmie blinked again and waited for developments.

"I'm not going to begin on Wall Street," the reformer stated confidentially.

Slightly bewildered, his listener agreed that this might prove a little premature.

"But I *am* going to begin on your musical trade journals!"

"What?"

"The Musical Courier, Musical America and all those other blackguards."

"How so?"

"By establishing a paper of my own!"

"Oh—" returned Krimmie, suddenly thought of the quarterly and stopped.

"What do you think of the idea?"

"Well——"

"I've even thought of a title—two titles in fact—and I wonder which you'd choose? You must be able to advise me?"

Krimmie tried not to smile, eyed the chessboard, picked up one of the knights and moved it absent-mindedly. "What are they?" he requested.

"Musical Progress or Musical Advance. Think carefully now."

Krimmie wrinkled his brow for time, thought carefully and then declared: "It seems to me the latter's more euphonious."

"Just as I expected," Hopkins exclaimed triumphantly. "Didn't I say you're the man?"

"I beg pardon?"

"Wait a moment!" the reformer interrupted and held up his hand.

Krimmie was visited by visions of paying a call on his landlord at last. But he waited for Hopkins to continue. There was no telling what freakish quirk would come next. The latter brought his fist down on the table, causing even the queens to topple over, and leaning across the board, confided in a whisper: "I'm against all symphony orchestras!" Then he sat back and watched the effect of this announcement.

Krimmie nearly tumbled out of his chair. Hopkins grinned with satisfaction.

"I don't quite follow you," Krimmie confessed confusedly.

Hopkins offered him a cigar, lit it for him, and then bit off and lit his own. "Listen," he responded with so much serenity that Krimmie was greatly reassured. Puffing in time with the reformer and resisting every temptation to interrupt him, he followed a sing-song recitative which held the glamour of the tale of Balboa discovering the Pacific Ocean.

Franklin Hopkins saw no adequate reason why the performance of symphonies, or indeed of operas, should be determined, in the string department, by violins, violas, violoncellos. In his growing vexation with such old-fashioned whims, he had come to deride their everlasting bowing and scraping. They were all very well in their day, but, like other antiques, they ought to go or make room for progress or variation. The earth may revolve on the same old axis, but the ways of man must improve. Reproduction was not the sole aim of nature. Evolution was the thing. He would not attempt to supplant the string body, not with the whole world against him. But he could experiment—experiment's the word nowadays—with an improvement or novelty, and without the eternal necessity of rushing to Europe for it. In short, there was a new instrument on the market—"made in America, if you please." A combination of the mandolin and the lute, known as the mandolute, with the solo register of the violin and mandolin and the tone, at times, of the lute. Not a bastard or makeshift either, but a thing absolutely flawless and original. Now, this mandolute, like the violin, had a family. As it grew in dimensions, it turned into a mandola, a mandocello, a mandobass. With this family as a foundation, he was determined to open a department in Musical Advance for the dissemination of propaganda in behalf of mandolute orchestras and, furthermore, to establish such an orchestra himself. For the leader, he had a

certain virtuoso in mind, the prize mandolinist, Valentine Abt. The recitative closed on this major cadence. Hopkins eyed Krimmie once more.

Hemmed in by conflicting reactions, Krimmie stared at the board. In the matter of extravagant schemes, he had met his peer. Smitten with the most rueful qualms, he wondered how often he himself, in buttonholing people, must have looked and sounded like this crank.

"I take it you're somewhat impressed?" Hopkins intervened.

"Somewhat?"

The reformer was delighted with the tone of Krimmie's echo, clapped him on the shoulder and declared: "I felt from the start you're the very man to help me."

Dreading he had committed himself too far, Krimmie stammered certain formulas detrimental to himself. Hopkins silenced him with: "None of your modesty with me! When like meets like, there's no occasion for it."

Krimmie reluctantly agreed that this was undoubtedly true, and Hopkins immediately invited him to his suite of rooms in Carnegie Hall. "I'll show you my plans for the magazine and let you listen to the mandolute. They'll argue much better than I can."

Krimmie ventured to say further argument would hardly be necessary, that he understood both issues thoroughly. Before he was aware of the trend of his comment, he heard himself adding that he had once had ideas about a magazine and as for musical instruments, years and years ago he had played on a mandolin——

"What did I tell you?" cried Hopkins.

In desperation, Krimmie tried to retreat, but his new friend cut him off.

"You're just the man to manage the paper for me. Nobody can handle such a thing alone. I'll be editor and you managing

editor. That's settled. As for your mandolin, with all due respect, when you meet the mandolute, you'll scrap it——"

"But I did that years ago——"

"Well—when you try this new instrument, you'll start all over again!"

A few minutes later, Krimmie found himself in Hopkins' studio.

"Just run your hand across this thing and note the difference."

Krimmie took the rosewood instrument. It looked like a mandolin, except that the belly was flat instead of round. It was decidedly more comfortable to hold. He tried a few preliminary chords—Lord, what a haunting tone—and strayed into what he remembered of a scene in The Magic Flute. As he passed his hand over the strings, the response was so caressing that he vaguely imagined himself a rejuvenated troubadour. Modulating into another key, he was led into the opening strains of the Macbeth Overture. The dickens, he said to himself, and was amazed that what followed didn't sound altogether ghastly. He stopped before the motif announcing the arrival of Lady Macbeth, smiled and looked up at Hopkins.

The impresario burst into a generous dithyramb. "Why, my dear fellow, what do you mean with your hypocritical modesty? That bit of Mozart was heavenly—and that other bit—where does that come from? I don't seem to recognize it."

Krimmie looked down at the instrument. "Something I heard somewhere in my youth."

"I'd like to hear you play some of my songs," Hopkins interposed plaintively. "Nobody's ever sung them—singers are such a pack of dolts. I'll give you a copy of a collection of mine—and you'll take that instrument too. I want you to keep it."

Krimmie protested, but Hopkins assured him he had others

just like it. "I'll never miss this one, not with you to play on it—and give my songs a lift."

Hopkins was a godsend, after all. Unable to express his gratitude, Krimmie could only revert to a mood of banter: "What next, old man?"

"One thing at a time," the reformer replied with an air of mysterious grandeur. . . .

Krimmie, back in his own room, was an easy convert, not to what his friend proposed to do to the violin family, but to the continued advance of the mandolute over the mandolin. Any old tune sounded vastly better on it; and the delicate thing had manifold possibilities. But before he returned to personal considerations, he must try Hopkins' songs. With considerable trepidation on the one hand and a predetermined prejudice in their favor on the other, he opened the volume at random. If the songs were at all like Hopkins, there would be no doubting their originality. For his sake, if for no other reason, he wanted to enjoy them and be able to say so sincerely. He knew the terrific plight of the average American composer, compared to which even a poet's lot was "a 'appy one." Few unknown composers succeeded in publishing their scores without reimbursing the Messrs. Schirmer, Ditson and Fischer for the honor. And the cost of printing a work as ambitious as an overture, concerto or symphony was prohibitive. Nor could one afford to pay professional copyists for the instrumental parts of a score so that the work might be submitted to a metropolitan conductor with the fragile hope that the great man might abrogate the traditions of his society long enough to give a stranger a chance to be heard. Then came the critics, who sniffed at anything new, especially if perpetrated on this side the Atlantic. And the public, which was bound to yawn and yearn for Beethoven's Fifth, next on the program, and sit up once more under the opening blows of the Fate motif. Hopkins was no exception to the rule. He had

paid for the publication of his songs—thanks to his blessed inheritance.

Krimmie tried the whole of one song, half of another, part of a third and only the beginning of a fourth. To his growing dismay, he discovered that the songs weren't songs at all, but hymn tunes with hymn chords. With a frantic hope that the fault might lie elsewhere, he turned from the music to the words. The words were hopeless; some of the most sentimental poems extant, with the worst of Longfellow leading the way. Why must American composers add to the world's misery by picking on the most mawkish drivel to inspire their muse? True, the public rarely listened to the words and singers rarely enunciated them. Even so, why not choose the great lyric poets instead of the most abject? Still, hadn't Schubert himself chosen the latter in many instances? Could anything be more grotesque than Schikaneder's asinine libretto to which Mozart composed The Magic Flute? The words were not to blame. One could even overlook them in the Hopkins dilemma, since he had sedulously avoided their meaning by interpreting them religiously. But hymn tunes—the unconscious outcome of so many years at an organ in the small church at home—they were pathetic, tragic. Krimmie closed the book. It would be impossible to say what he felt. And totally unnecessary fundamentally. He must employ the ancient formula among artists—"I prefer this one to that one—" and so on. It was much kinder than the truth, and in a case like Hopkins', much more imperative. If the man ever grew, that would be the time to criticize his work.

But how about you?—he turned on himself. What about Macbeth, the symphony for Willie and Albert, the march of the American Patrol? Mere indiscretions, he answered; the follies of adolescence to which one doesn't add the senility of cherishing and rushing them into print. As for Macbeth's mournful theme he had caught himself strumming—that was

a temporary aberration for which a trace of the past was responsible. Or a way of testing the difference between the cracked mandolin Lou Volland had given him and this delicate bit of rosewood Hopkins had forced on him.

He passed his hand over the strings and improvised. He would not go back to composing things, or forward. It would only interfere with his writing. Still, the instrument had possibilities, tempting possibilities, down in its resonant belly. Better not give way to them, though. Better listen to Hopkins' other proposal: the managerial post on Musical Advance. This was more in line with his present needs. And Tommy's. Had he forgotten so soon what his friend had offered—twenty-five a week to start with—seven dollars more than he'd ever had before?

Why, they were to begin work at once—that very afternoon. He pulled out his watch—three o'clock. Idiot! He shoved the mandolute into its case, grabbed his hat, ran down stairs, down Fourteenth Street, chased a Seventh Avenue car, jumped aboard and rode to Carnegie Hall. He was certain to be late—he was late already. What would Hopkins say?

Hopkins said nothing. In fact, he wasn't there. The stenographer he had hired, "to start things going," apologized to Krimmie: "Mr. Hopkins said for me to tell you he'd be here directly and for you to please wait." Ten minutes later, the impresario arrived, flapping his arms, panting and wiping his brow. "Sorry, old man"—he spluttered—"I was detained down in Wall Street. Showing a man my attack on the capitalist system. He was enthusiastic. But none of that now. Let's get down to work. Musical Advance is the word."

"Right you are," Krimmie echoed. And smiled at himself and Hopkins. . . .

X

A DESCENT INTO VAUDEVILLE

THERE were decided drawbacks to Musical Advance. Although Krimmie received press tickets to all the concerts and operas in town, he seldom made use of them unless some attractive novelty was announced. He had had more than enough of most of the musical doings of the day at a time when he could barely afford the admission price to a standee's post in the gallery. And what he didn't hear up there, he had covered fairly well during his three-year sojourn in Aeolian Hall. Fate could not have selected a more appropriate person as the recipient of her paradoxical generosity. There was such a thing as attending most operas once too often; while the average symphonic repertoire gave one the impression that the conductors courteously eschewed contradicting one another. Krimmie frequently gave his tickets to friends who were in need of them and had little difficulty in reviewing performances he never attended. One had only to examine the promised program and the names, respectively, of the conductor, orchestra and soloist, to fulfill the behests of verisimilitude. Now and then, there were artists who made an old work sound fresh and almost unfamiliar, and he hustled to Carnegie Hall and came out with new dreams. But such men and women were not very popular with the audience. Or with the critics and managers.

Compared with his ally, the editor, Krimmie might have been dubbed a pioneer, rather than a reformer. That phase of his fanaticism which assumed the guise of propaganda bestirred itself with the concerns of unknown composers and their possible influence on the future. The masters were safe.

There were plenty of ensembles and individuals to go on interpreting them and a large enough public to support the interpreters. Most folk jammed Carnegie Hall not so much to revere the classics as to rave about the latest Pole, the latest velocity, the latest high C. They adored Rosenthal because he could finish the Butterfly Etude a bar or two ahead of De Pachmann—as any stop-watch might have proved. Or they fell into hysterics when Kubelik toyed with The Devil's Trill without unmasking his death-like composure; or Paderewski rendered a certain Beethoven sonata in the moonlight, after the electrician had dimmed the globes overhead; or one couldn't distinguish the flute from Melba or Melba from the flute when Lucia went mad. The masters would never decay for want of interpreters and listeners.

But who was to foster and preserve the men of the day and the morrow, not alone in music, but in the other arts? What about the advance in poetry, fiction, the drama, painting, sculpture? He tried these questions on Hopkins and the editor replied: "Why not make room for them right in our own little paper?" So Krimmie opened several departments—curious in the light of what the readers had subscribed for—took charge of the book and dramatic sections and appointed Lance editor of the art pages, with an ample allowance for the reproduction of representative works by American painters and sculptors. This was a mere introduction. Without distracting the editor with too many queries—a man perpetually immersed in other pursuits—Krimmie decided on a throw-back to The American Quarterly and managed to collect several of the manuscripts he had had to return. Not the least of these was Hutchins Hapgood's David, The Story Of A Soul. As before, Krimmie planned to run it serially and verbatim. The very first instalment absorbed nearly half of the second issue. Hopkins eyed it quizzically, scratched his head and, when he was able to speak, remarked: "I take it you're on the right

track, but have you enough room in the next issue for my editorial on the mandolute orchestra and the opening instalment of The Curse Of Our Most Evil Canyon?"

"Certainly," Krimmie assured him.

"Go ahead then," Hopkins responded.

But—wrote in several subscribers, moved to the expression of a type of disinterested sarcasm—would you mind telling me just what it is you are sending me? I was under the impression I had signed a check entitling me to the honor of reading your views on *music?* The few people who advertised—firms dedicated to the manufacture of pianos and the like—dictated curt notes discontinuing their advertising contracts. Still others, of a squeamish disposition, were frankly irate with David. "It's nude," "indecent," "licentious," "and what's it got to do with music?"

Since the property wasn't his, Krimmie couldn't cope with these attacks. He must take them straight to the owner and ask his advice. But Hopkins sat in conference with someone—as Krimmie could hear most distinctly. He could only hear Hopkins faintly—a phenomenon ordinarily. But Herr Lorenz, the great Bavarian tenor, closeted with the editor, had the forthright bellows of a bull—an ordeal intensified by the fact that the thing the tenor tore apart was a Hopkins hymn tune. Krimmie could barely catch the composer's enraptured piano accompaniment.

During one of his peregrinations, Hopkins had encountered an enormous gentleman who claimed he had filled leading tenor rôles in the foremost opera houses of Germany, Austria, Holland and what not. The man didn't need buttonholing; he buttonholed Hopkins; and before many days, the twain were inseparable and Krimmie was relegated to obscurity. The sessions in the next room were practically endless. By way of substantiating his modest claims, Herr Lorenz rehearsed whole scenes for Hopkins' benefit; and for Krimmie's whenever he

was invited to share their enjoyment. The man's voice was indubitably operatic. He could strike high notes quite accurately, give vent to the most terrifying noises and, theoretically, impress a sufficient number of prospective listeners. The stage presence he affected was persuasive enough; he could wring his hands, tremble all over, roll his eyes and look ghastly. He would surely make a hit in the Miserere, hanging from the prison cell and haranguing Leonora; or in the balcony scene with Juliet, yodelling like Gounod's Romeo. One could even picture him pulling on the tights of Goethe's Faust and emerging in Gounod's Salvé Dimora. Best of all, he would die a natural death with Aïda, sob at the remains of Violetta, or be stabbed in those scenes where so many noble tenors are killed and happily removed.

If the *Hofopernsänger* required any further guile for waylaying the affections of Hopkins, the book of songs provided the opportunity. The tenor pounced on them, rooted them out, shoved the composer onto the stool and let loose. As he was the only singer who had ever attempted and stayed with them, the neglected composer was completely subdued. Krimmie had his suspicions about the oily Bavarian. But as he himself was involved in a sort of white lie by saying "nice things" about the songs, he had to postpone warning his erstwhile ally. Besides, Hopkins was so entranced with Lorenz that interference at this time would have been futile and might have endangered Krimmie's job. The tenor not only ran the composer but threatened to run every undertaking in which the latter was concerned. So far, he had not approached Musical Advance, but his sly friendliness to Krimmie plumbed an ominous undertone.

The Bavarian had taken an active interest in the mandolute and strenuously seconded Hopkins' plans for an orchestra. He finally proposed a campaign so plausible that even Krimmie approved of it. The reformer was urged to organize a band

of about twenty men and hand the baton to Valentine Abt, while the tenor engaged a charming lyric soprano. Outside the mandolin star, the promoters had little difficulty in assembling the company and less difficulty in finding a temperamental Italian to take Abt's place. "Pretty smooth sailing, eh, Frankie?"

"Smooth is the word."

Presently, the several short scenes the tenor had set his heart on were put into rapid rehearsal: the duets from Trovatore and Romeo And Juliet and a tenor and soprano solo—the infectious Mad Scene and the confectionery La donn' è mobile. In between the duets and solos, the mandolute family would radiate the quintessential novelties: rearrangements of Offenbach's Barcarolle, Victor Herbert's American Fantasie and, for those in the audience who were as yet unequal to classical music, excerpts from one of the musical comedies.

The troupe was to make its introductory appeal to vaudeville. The promoters could easily ask two thousand dollars a week for the act. Not that they would get it. But if they asked two thousand, the Keith managers would surely offer one. All hands would then compromise on fifteen hundred. Variety audiences were fond of tabloid opera, and, with the orchestra as "the latest thing," the idea would "go big." Mr. Albee himself came to one of the rehearsals and sanctioned an immediate "try-out." Not in New York, but in Albany—with the proviso—"If you fellows make good up there we'll give you an opening down here." Lorenz clapped Hopkins on the back and Hopkins clapped Lorenz. In their frenzy the promoters consumed about a dozen of Frankie's cigars at one sitting, and the tenor blossomed forth in a pearl gray suit at his partner's expense.

Krimmie was instructed to stay behind and keep an eye on developments at home while the company boarded a train and descended on "the sticks." After the first night, telegrams

flew back and forth. The conquest of Albany had begun. A day or two later, "this little one-horse town" had surrendered. Mr. Albee followed suit—with another proviso, however. "I'll give you gentlemen a week at Keith's Union Square and if you make good down there, we'll see." More telegrams flew back and forth. Krimmie received this cryptogram: Play Keith Circuit Beginning Union Square Next Monday Matinée Hurrah. It was signed Frank.

He fell a prey to the customary reverie. At least one of his boyhood dreams was about to materialize. Ever since the days when he sat behind his own puppet theatre, he had had fleeting desires to work back-stage in a legitimate theatre. Even before that time, down in the backyard behind 1667, he had fancied himself a grown-up assuming the rôles of a great tragedian. He smiled at these memories and the turn actualities had taken. Keith's was not a legitimate theatre, nor had he been assigned to a part in the cast—not even among the men in the orchestra. Even so, waiting for the troupe to come back, he suffered the keenest impatience. . . .

Vaudeville, for the most part, had become his favorite type of theatrical entertainment. Outside the old German Theatre on Irving Place, to which his mother had taken him as a child, the stock companies at Daly's and the Empire and that magnificent band of joyous performers at Weber and Fields' Music Hall, if one was interested in the theatre arts and hoped to find some expression of the native character of the day, one journeyed to vaudeville. The first variety theatre he ever visited was Koster and Bial's. Then he went to Tony Pastor's, not far from Tammany Hall, Proctor's, later incorporated with Keith's, and Hurtig and Seamon's. But Hammerstein's Victoria was unquestionably the most fascinating den of all. Krimmie loved the polyglot audience of politicians, thugs, thespians, gamblers, tin-horn sports and ladies of doubtful virtue. It was the most "hard-boiled" in town; maintained an

attitude of mind quite as *blasé* as that which distinguished an audience at a concert of the Kneisel Quartet; and would have held its own among present-day high-brows who have discovered the seven arts of the low-brow.

Not the least noteworthy feature of the place was the British bar in the rear; but instead of London barmaids, colored gentlemen, arrayed in stiff white shirts and black swallow-tails, waited on the guests. A slender poet had charge of the waiters. His manner was so foreign to the smoke-laden, drink-sunken atmosphere, that he soon received the nickname, Percy. He had not only disowned the stories he had tried to write, but his poems and essays. Had anyone there suspected him of such a past and accused him of writing The Poisoned Lake, he would have laughingly denied the relationship. Krimmie saw less and less of his chum. And when he called on him, during the intermission, told him less and less about himself. They confined their brief talks to some act on the bill—Jim Jeffries or Jack Johnson, Bert Williams or Eva Tanguay, Vesta Victoria or Albert Chevalier. In the midst of the chat, Lance would have to excuse himself and leave Krimmie to his own devices. The latter would return to his seat, follow the second half of the bill, and wonder about Lance. Not that he didn't envy him in a job so close to the footlights. But he could not resist trying to figure out some plan for winning him back to the game they had started together. But he never found it. . . .

Well, when Manager Hopkins led his troupe out of the Grand Central Depot, no one was more excited than the Managing Editor of Musical Advance. As the men marched up Fifth Avenue for final instructions at the headquarters in Carnegie Hall, he approached the impresario.

"So it's really true?"

Hopkins inclined an attentive ear. "What?"

"The try-out at Keith's Union Square?"

"The try-out?" Hopkins swept the horizon with a depre-

cating gesture and appealed to Lorenz with an air of mock-helplessness.

"We're to have forty nice little weeks on the road," the tenor interposed, twirling his new cane.

"Forty?"

"Yes—if we make good——"

"Oh——"

"Can you see us *not* making good?"

Krimmie didn't answer. He had a sudden vision of the vast continent west of the Hudson River. Lorenz and Hopkins nudged each other and pulled at their cigars. In a daze, Krimmie fell to the rear. Back in the ranks, he heard the same story in impetuous variations of braggadocio. At ten in the morning, they would have to report at Keith's for the dress rehearsal along with the rest of the bill for the week. After that, Rochester, Buffalo, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake, San Francisco. And after that, they'd be prepared to attack Constantinople itself.

Most of the men of the orchestra were Italians who, like Krimmie, had been converted from the mandolin to the mandolute. They had no trouble in following the beat of their maestro and rendering the comparatively easy accompaniments and instrumental interludes. Much as Krimmie enjoyed mingling with them, he preferred his allotted task to joining in on the Miserere, etc. He had been delegated to keep a further eye on happenings in the rear, and to assist the tenoro robusto in his dressing-room. It was the best time in the year for trying out new acts, but the worst for trying out humans. At the beginning of July, most of the stages were vacant, even in vaudeville; while the sun ran true to form by sending thermometers up into the nineties. The star's dressing-room, a cramped affair without ventilation, illuminated by a blistering electric bulb, was a stifling, maddening chamber. But Krimmie would have endured the pet tortures of the Spanish Inquisition for the sake of the game he was learning.

Hopkins' "revolutionary act" was given a place of honor on the second half of the bill. It was to be preceded by an hilarious travesty on the heavy, Shakespearian tragedian, Robert Mantell, winding his toga about him, frowning majestically and booming: "Wouldst desecrate thine art by a descent into vaudeville?" and to be followed by an unforgettable piece of clownery between two maladroit tumblers who were known as O'Dowd and O'Donnell. In the Monday morning rehearsal, these gentlemen had spotted the Bavarian Duke, roaming about the wings and, with his ponderous accent, giving necessary and unnecessary orders everywhere. As the Duke in Verdi's Rigoletto, feathers in his hat, clanking sword, silk tights and pointed shoes, Lorenz was to carry the weight of opening the act by singing La donn' è mobile off stage and then coming forward gradually. Just as he reached the famous high C, he intended to hold it, pass through the curtains onto the stage and, giving it a final squeeze, let it go, doff his hat carelessly, sweep the ground with the feathers and bow to the enraptured audience. The plan and effect went "beautifully" in Albany and still more so in the Keith rehearsal—"eh, Frankie, what do you say?"—and Frankie said everything. But Hopkins, who had gambled his remaining fortune on the act—paid for the instruments, instrumentalists, stars, costumes, scenery, publicity and railroad fares—had gambled without O'Dowd and O'Donnell.

These gentlemen had been going the rounds for years with their ground and lofty tumbling. Perhaps, doing the same old turn had grown unbearably drab. Possibly, they were jealous of newcomers and resented the prospect of losing the limelight to such impertinent small fry. Or they had taken a particular dislike to Lorenz, who had already fallen into the gorgeous strut of a headliner. At all events, a preliminary rehearsal in their case was so much a matter of routine that they hadn't run through their cues with the leader of the Keith

orchestra. The leader knew these cues of old; so did his men.

At the opening matinée, there was even less reason why, at the conclusion of the Mantell parody, O'Dowd and O'Donnell should have stationed themselves in the wings. They were to follow, not precede, Lorenz and the mandolutes. Still, they looked so innocent and nodded and smiled so encouragingly on the rapid, final preparations of a début the whole world was waiting for, that nobody troubled about them. Some of the mandolutists acknowledged their interest by nodding and smiling back in a becoming Italian fashion. The leader suddenly rapped on his stand and all eyes turned to the baton. He raised it, struck a quick beat, and the orchestra played the dulcet measures of the introduction. One could hear people out front say "ah" and the Duke clear his throat and emit the preliminary phrases of the aria. At this critical moment, O'Dowd and O'Donnell began rehearsing their act in the wings. Nobody saw them at first; otherwise one might have demanded why they chose the very aisle or alley down which the great tenor had to make his way. They seemed oblivious to his approach; nor did his insane gesticulation attract their attention. As he neared them, they caught sight of him, spread apart to let him pass, with profuse apologies and humble bows on either side. The tenor had arrived at his high C and, heroically warding them off, tried to hold on to the note and give it a glorious orotundity. His face red and swollen and his abdomen heaving, he got half way through the high C, stepped through the curtains and onto the stage. The note cracked in two. He had enough presence of mind to doff his hat, sweep the ground and bow. But the audience grinned, then laughed and finally guffawed. Lorenz retreated in confusion. The manager of the theatre, eyeing proceedings out front, had an apoplectic stroke. So did poor Frankie. Back-stage, only the intervention of the next number averted a riot; and the fact that Lorenz had to change from the princely attire of the Duke

to the prison costume of Manrico and exchange his clanking sword for a clanking chain.

Before the famous duet, Krimmie, as per instructions, placed the ladder for Manrico to reach the barred window of his cell and answer the black-gowned Leonora in the scene of the Miserere. The soprano and the family of mandolutes had revived the company's stock; the audience had enjoyed the Mad Scene, the Barcarolle and the Victor Herbert number. There was still time to save the act. Manrico, not entirely recovered from the affront to the Duke, was ready to climb to the window. His chain and handcuffs rattled angrily, rather than gloomily; but the heightened effect sounded doubly realistic. The opening chorus of nuns—played by the mandocellos and mandobasses—had passed processionally; Leonora was singing her aria underneath the cell; and the whole scene lay in darkness except for the spotlight which helped the sad lady find her way across the stage. Then, just as she concluded, held out her longing arms and gazed up at the window, and the spotlight followed her gesture, left her and picked out the window, it shone on . . . But where was the pale face of Manrico? And where his answering voice? Back-stage, a commotion ensued one could hear out front; out front, a commotion one could hear back-stage. The ladder had vanished.

The conductor had enough resourcefulness to start the scene over again. The nuns passed as before, Leonora sang, concluded, held out her arms and gazed once more. This time, the spotlight found Manrico's ghastly face behind the bars, and one could hear him answer, timidly, tremblingly—a marvellous effect. But the Miserere was ruined. In the rear of the auditorium, the theatre manager rushed up and down. So did Hopkins. When they collided, it was the end of poor Frankie. As per contract—at the compromise of eight hundred dollars—the act was permitted to finish the week. To the forty week journey on the road, the Keith representative said,

"good-night." The man refused to listen to Lorenz's story. "We don't want excuses here. Not on this circuit. Try them on the ten-twenty-thirties. Maybe they'll listen to you."

During the remainder of the week, the act picked up. But not sufficiently to induce the management to rescind or soften its decision. At a farewell meeting between Hopkins and the Keith representative, the latter declared sympathetically: "I'll say this for your act. Your mandolutes aren't bad and your soprano bears watching. But that greasy cut-throat is more than my clients can stomach. He can't sing, he can't act and he looks like a Thanksgiving turkey."

Hopkins was through with Lorenz, through with the orchestra, through with Musical Advance and through with New York. He succeeded in selling the periodical to a couple of young pioneers who saw the possibility of converting it into a trade paper, not unlike The Musical Courier and Musical America. They gave him a few hundred dollars for the thing. David, The Story Of A Soul, and Krimmie's other ideas were unceremoniously deleted from the next issue. The subscribers revived. Hopkins managed to sell the mandolute family—at a reasonable reduction—and paid off the musicians. With the small sum left over, the ex-impresario and dreamer of upheavals stole back to the town he had come from, got back his job on the organ and left Wall Street, Broadway and kindred monstrosities to the wolves.

Krimmie and his six months' managerial editorship had parted. He wasn't exactly sorry for himself. Getting into vaudeville and seeing America could wait. But he felt Hopkins' tragedy keenly. It was the last he ever saw of a man to whom he owed more than a conventional debt of gratitude. As time wore on, and the fortuitous mandolute grew to unsuspected uses and brought him into unexpected contacts, the indebtedness developed. Now and then, the shadow of a melancholy scarecrow brushed the instrument. . . .

XI

A SERENADE

A FEW fairly cheerful days followed. Krimmie had saved enough money to see him through the summer—usually the most arid financial period—and, now that he was free to cultivate his own moods once more, he would have abundant tranquillity for the development of his latest idea: the application of a melodic and harmonic test to the small group of poems in free form he had gathered together. Strumming the mandolute, improvising backgrounds in accordance with the atmosphere of a poem, he would go over the syllables in his line divisions, add some here, clip others there, until the words and sounds seemed as true to each other as he could make them, and a balance of meaning and movement had been attained throughout. Before he was conscious of the trend of his activity, one of the backgrounds, starting with a casual improvisation, had attached itself to one of the poems; each time he read the lines, the music echoed the same clear accompaniment. He was thrilled with this compositional kinship. Laboring with feverish enthusiasm, he now tested the music by an application of the words to each note and chord, and then *vice versa,* backward and forward, until the first of the tone-poems had shaped itself beyond peradventure. It was a serenade.

In his joyous trance, he shoved all the objects in the room against the walls and paced up and down the path, chanting the words and twanging the accompaniment. "I've got it!" he cried to himself. Possessed in every fibre, he stamped and swayed to the changing rhythm and awkwardly applied a pantomimic test. "I can see two dancers interpreting it!"

Emotionally exhausted, he sat down on the couch, laid the instrument aside, buried his head in his hands and tried to see the dancers more distinctly.

Here was the ragpicker, Love—blandly serenading and stealing hearts—and yonder a running figure, a wretched, staccato figure, imploring the little demon to desist. For each red rose the ragpicker filched, one could see it drop a white rose—which the dishevelled figure called Sorrow. At the height of the dialogue, debonair on the one hand, poignant on the other, the ragpicker disappeared jauntily and the figure fell to earth. A delicate curtain descended on the miniature tragicomedy. Krimmie got up, seized the instrument and paced the floor once more.

He did not hear a step in the hall or a knock on the door. Nor did he hear someone come in. But he caught the quick question, "What's the matter with you?"—turned, dropped the mandolute on the couch, hurried to Tommy and began to swing her about. She didn't respond.

"What's the matter?" he echoed, letting her go.

Tommy, very pale, smiled.

"Nothing——" she faltered.

Premonitions chased the dancers out of his head as he watched her remove her hat. He hadn't seen her for more than a week. But that was because she had been visiting relatives in Boston. As she had written him. He had answered her to beware of the Puritans, and added something tactful about the sudden loss of his job. Could that be the trouble? "A happy loss on the whole"—he had tried to conclude consolingly. "I'll be getting another soon—and wait till you see all the gold I've hoarded." Pretty lame humor after all these years.

He did not watch her smooth down her hair in front of the mirror, but waited for her to settle on the couch. She sat down on the edge. With a sinking sensation, he sat down on the

chair. Could it be the summer again? He hoped it must be that, rather than the other. Though the summer was awful enough in itself. He could feel it creep over him—the return of a slow, dull pang. But they still had a week together? And would see each other every day? She looked straight ahead.

"Father says——"

"Yes?" he helped her.

"We've got to go sooner than he had planned."

"Sooner?"

She nodded slowly. Something collapsed inside him.

"He has to attend a bankers' convention in Chicago and from there we go to the Rockies."

He felt what was coming and bowed his head.

"He has to be there on Saturday——"

"Saturday?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll have to leave——"

"Tomorrow—morning."

He braced himself against the table. Searched desperately for an optimistic word. She looked at him.

"We'll be back soon——"

He tried to nod. "Like last time?"

"Maybe a little sooner. Father has to be back early in September."

"That's a long time too."

"Not so long as last?"

"It'll seem so."

Tommy touched him. He looked up—couldn't see her—threw himself beside her. They held each other close.

"Anybody'd think—" she bantered him——

"I know——"

She pushed him gently away and stroked his hand for a moment. He was too wretched to respond. Couldn't trust himself to move, speak, do anything but sit there.

"And what have *you* been doing?"

"Lost my job——" he began, with a comical shrug.

She studied the floor. "That's nothing——"

"Of course not—it was frightfully uncertain at best—though I've saved enough money to—open a grocery store."

"What's become of Mr. Hopkins?"

"The poor devil's broke—went back to Indiana—and the pipe organ——"

"He left the mandolute——"

"Yes."

Krimmie eyed it with aversion. Tommy fondled it and held it out to him. He shook his head.

"Not even Macbeth?"

"No." He smiled and took the instrument. "You talk and I'll strum."

He began to improvise. The resonant tones relieved him a little.

"Tell me about Boston——"

"It's as dull as ever—and the people your same old Puritans. You haven't begun to play——"

"Which do you want?"

"Some of the things behind the store."

He had told her over and over again about his parents and how they sat at the dining-room table and listened to the zither and the mandolin. Tommy loved these reminiscences—cherished them as her own. But Krimmie could only manage *Kommt Ein Vogel Geflogen.*

"Is that all?"

"But you stopped talking——"

"It's only small talk——"

"But it helps."

She quickly started to ramble about some relative—an aunt or uncle whose name he didn't catch. Strumming away, he missed other details as well. How he would have loved to

play the serenade. Her serenade. And how she would have loved it. More than anything he had ever given her. He heard himself strumming the introduction. No—this would never do. Drag in still another egotistical piece of insanity? Blindly and heartlessly interrupt again what they had planned all these years? Dash her one dwindling hope once more to the ground? And then delude her with still another vision like the last? Another job quite as asinine?

Suddenly, he heard her ask: "What on earth have you been doing to our room?"

He stared wildly at her. Let his glance follow hers along the walls. There was no excuse to cover the thing. Not even a lie. Otherwise, he might have said, housecleaning, and she would have laughed at him. But she had seen his idiotic parade when she came in.

He looked at her helplessly. Clutched her arm. She drew him closer. The mandolute fell to the floor. A strained silence covered them. Tommy and Krimmie wept. . . .

The next morning, well ahead of train time, Krimmie stole to the rotunda of the Grand Central Station. Not to say something further to Tommy, which would be impossible, but to get another glimpse of her. She didn't expect him. When they parted, he hadn't thought of going to the station. And if he had, he wouldn't have told her. It would have frightened her.

Screening himself behind a crowd of people, he waited near the sign-board announcing the schedule of the Rocky Mountain Flier. He made no effort to read the long list of stations.

He didn't recognize her at first. She was wearing a new summer dress. But there was no mistaking the familiar, slender figure, the short quick step, the way she walked straight ahead. She was preceded by two colored porters carrying bags and suit-cases, and escorted by a tall, white-haired, white-bearded gentleman. He led her by the arm, protectingly, and

helped her thread the crowd around the bulletin board. It was Krimmie's first glimpse of her father.

Without looking a second time, Krimmie moved away. Myriad emotions assailed him. Blundering through the crowd, he tried to console himself. She would write to him as she always did in the summer. And he would write to her. Everything. And in the fall—July, August, September—months and years away—they'd be together again. Meanwhile?

The word forced him to push and elbow his way out of the rotunda and into Forty-second Street. Another crowd surrounded and hemmed him in. Each person jostling him seemed to ask the same question. He managed to free himself by turning down Madison Avenue. But the two mocking syllables danced in pursuit of him.

PART III
OTHERS

I

THE GLEBE

THERE has been considerable uncertainty, and in view of it, many an impassioned discussion concerning the precise birthday of what is popularly called the renaissance of American poetry. Some people fancy the year, 1912, when The Poetry Magazine appeared in Chicago, The Poetry Journal in Boston and Vachel Lindsay printed his Rhymes To Be Traded For Bread. Others like to lay the wreath on B. Russell Herts, the editor of Moods, which antedated Poetry and The Poetry Journal, issued The Lyric Year, an anthology of American poets, and precipitated a country-wide controversy because the five hundred dollar prize was awarded to Orrick Johns for his poem, Second Avenue, instead of to the new girl-poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay for her poem, Renascence. Many folk register a claim for the annual volumes of magazine verse collected by the indefatigable encomiast, William Stanley Braithwaite. Still others argue for the year of the outbreak of the world war because Robert Frost was at last published in this country, and books by Conrad Aiken, James Oppenheim and Louis Untermeyer emerged; or for the year preceding the war, because John Gould Fletcher issued five different books with four different publishers in London, while the first of the Imagist Anthologies made a quiet bow just below Washington Square. Some dialecticians glorify 1916, with persuasive paragraphs in behalf of Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River and Carl Sandburg's Chicago Poems. Then there are those who retort, but what about the man in the wilderness whose Children Of The Night came out in 1897, when you young men were in your teens and pulling on your first long trousers? Hearing

the name, Edwin Arlington Robinson, the young men who are wise put back their own dates on shelves and no longer brag about origins.

Working in further obscurity, Krimmie was greatly excited by the opening signs of what he felt to be the breaking of the soil. Not necessarily a new soil, but one that had been prepared by this and that forefather, nurtured by their descendants and finally penetrated by various contemporaries. The image was by no means clear, nor the feeling he had about it more than intuitional. The appearance of unrelated shoots filled him with too overpowering an emotion for him coldly to analyse and give definitions to the exact causes and effects. The early poems of Pound, Sandburg, H. D., Lindsay and others, in the pages of the Chicago journal, thrilled him to an ecstasy he had never known before, mainly because they were being discovered in his generation and indicated endless possibilities across the vast continent. These men and women, unconscious of one another and unconscious of him in his silent hole, were helping to set him free. He no longer saw masks, but faces; no longer felt himself a hermit, but a related being; his loneliness disappeared.

Still another magazine came out of Chicago, The Little Review. Poetry was founded by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin. The Little Review, started by Margaret Anderson, developed with the aid of Jane Heap. In this periodical Krimmie read some beautiful tales by a man from Ohio and some exquisite poems by a man from Tennessee: Sherwood Anderson and Maxwell Bodenheim. What had happened to the "hog-butcher of the world"? Was he, and not New York, to lead a new nation? Were women to play the rôle of pioneers formerly usurped by men? And these extraordinary fellows with polyglot names, starting up out of unknown places in the hinterland. What a hellish solitude must have been theirs.

And yet they were finding themselves? Could anything be more romantic than a man examining the graves of a town called Spoon River, or a man tenderly considering the thwarted passions of the inarticulate folk of Winesburg, or a man striding the prairies of Illinois with the irresistible chant of an inspired peasant? And who was this fellow trading his rhymes for bread? What about the city of his adoration, the Springfield of Lincoln and Lindsay? Could it be possible that poetry had come to America? Could anything be more miraculous?

Things were happening indeed, but they still refused to happen to Krimmie. Like many another, he rushed out manuscripts to the new publications and continued to receive rebuffs. Harriet Monroe wrote courteous little notes in an endeavor to correct his "peculiarities." Mitchell Kennerly, the white hope among publishers, told him to try again. So did Moods, The Little Review, The Poetry Journal. As far as he was concerned, were these ventures to widen the ruts of the old? He once more determined to have recourse to a magazine of his own and to collect therein the rejected work of men and women who deserved at least a small audience. As before, an accidental encounter with strangers encouraged this ambition.

He had met two young artists at the Daniel Gallery. One had returned from Paris, a convert to Post-Impressionism, while the other stayed at home and experimented with Cubism. Though both had been born in Russia, of Jewish parentage, Samuel Halpert and Man Ray were soon hailed in Fifth Avenue art circles as American painters. Despite the Parisian character of the tools they employed, the influence of the American scene, notably the architecture and machinery of the new land, took hold of Halpert and Ray, and one found in their work, melancholy on the one hand, cerebral on the other, the expression of an isolated cultural inheritance applied

to present-day backgrounds. They belonged to an ancient race which, notwithstanding the antagonism of the lands it wandered into, impregnated the earth under its feet with a passionate idealism. Early in the modern art movement one came across men like Weber, Walkowitz, Zorach, Halpert, Ray, Stieglitz. They were a phenomenon—until one learned to analyse the new soil in detachment and, beholding growing evidences of names of a foreign extraction predominating over the Anglo-Saxon of the Revolutionary era, concluded that America was less and less an English and more and more a European and Oriental offspring.

Halpert and Ray had rented a shack in Jersey, on the sunset slope of the Palisades, among a cluster of cottages not far from the village of Grantwood. Not long after Tommy had left for the Rockies, and Krimmie was peering about for a place to escape from a New York summer, Halpert invited him to spend a few days in the country. Krimmie eagerly accepted, packed a few things in a bag and was met by his hosts and guided down a winding road to a small white domicile under cool, green trees. He fell in love with the shack, the studio, the room they turned over to him and most of all with the view of the Jersey meadows, striped and streaked with the Passaic and Hackensack rivers, lazily rolling away to the horizon. His redundant comments might have proved a bore had it not been obvious that Krimmie had never received the benefits of an extended contact with nature. His hosts made no attempt to interrupt his dithyrambs—except to ask him to spend the rest of the summer with them.

The men divided the expenses into equal parts. The rental was nine dollars a month and the matter of food supplies a nominal average per week. Sam was the best of the cooks, but apart from his spaghetti and macaroni, the dishes he laid on the table had a resilient tendency. Krimmie resurrected the one culinary art he had learned from his mother: griddle cakes

and flap-jacks. Man's specialty was coffee and tea. Since Sam had to do most of the bending over the oil stove, a primitive, recalcitrant medium demanding all the patience he had inherited, Man and Krimmie shared the burdens of the sink, the former washing and the latter drying the dishes.

At the start, Krimmie's interest had been stirred by the paintings of Halpert, and he pursued it so far as to purchase, through a cordial arrangement of small monthly payments, the first canvas gloomy Sam sold on his return to America: a row of brooding jugs on a shelf. But after he discovered what Halpert could contribute to painting that had not been contributed by Cézanne, there was little to be added: the slow-moving convert to Post-Impressionism had a ponderous habit of repeating himself. With the ten-year younger Ray, one never knew what to anticipate. Man was only twenty-two at the time, but the large-eyed, curly-haired dreamer had an enviable record as a daring performer in versatile experiments.

A paradoxical feature of the renaissance of American painting, as well as of poetry, was this: almost the entire bulk of contributions to the new movement came from men in their thirties and early forties. An examination of the age of these "fresh young upstarts," each with a lingo of his own, elicited the fact that, in 1913, Sandburg was about thirty-six, Anderson and Frost the same and Masters about thirty-nine. Hartley, Marin, Walkowitz and Weber wellnigh tallied with the poets. In poetry, Bodenheim was virtually the sole exception; in painting, Ray. Man was already a remarkably inventive and assimilative individual. In his quiet, smiling fashion, he had not only applied the theories of Picasso to the problems of his own fastidious ego, but had begun to play with other media of expression. Always of a scientific turn, he eventually invented a process of taking photographs without a camera—an event recently acclaimed in Paris.

In the Grantwood days, Man earned his livelihood in a print-

shop in down-town Manhattan. One evening, after another discussion in the direction of an experimental magazine, a project Man and Krimmie had been planning for some time, the former announced that his boss had promised to ship right to their door the instrument with which they might solve their problem: an old printing press. A study of the paintings and drawings Man exhibited at the Daniel Gallery had shown Krimmie how uncanny he was in his æsthetic comprehension of machines. Man was just the fellow to do unexpected things with a printing press. In the absence of one, he had started to print by hand, stray, curious documents with a delicacy of line and a feeling for spatial values akin to the papyrus of an ancient era. He had also invented a process for taking facsimiles of the original, but as this was an expensive process, and one he had not perfected, Man reverted to the press and, like Krimmie, awaited its arrival with the keenest impatience.

Krimmie was to learn the mechanics of printing and to share with Man the labor of setting type, reading proofs and training his eye to surfaces. He was to gather the manuscripts, and Man the drawings for reproduction. They agreed on a title the former proposed in the course of much digging. The word, soil, constantly haunted their meditations. But the allies wanted a word that would qualify their search. Krimmie hit upon the synonym, glebe, and Man accepted it with gusto.

Sam Halpert, who listened to many of the discussions and was puzzled by most of them, frowned at the word. A realist and lover of exactness in solid proportions, he carefully consulted a Concise Oxford and, to his immense satisfaction, caught the religious connotation and confronted his friends with the charge: "Is it a church you're founding?"

The editors retorted, outvying each other in grandiloquence: "Isn't the soil universal?" "And art the one religion?"

Sam shrugged his shoulders, shuffled into the kitchen and laid some equal slices of bacon in a pan on the fire. To the

accompaniment of a noisy sizzling and popping, Man made a drawing for the first cover with the title predominating in an abstract design.

Because of periodic visits to art galleries, where he revised his ideas considerably, Krimmie discarded his desire for an American magazine in the blunderbuss style of the quarterly and Musical Advance. The issues he hoped to present with his new ally were to be one-man shows on an intimate scale; a few pages per issue or an occasional broadsheet. One of the first men to whom he appealed for material was the friendly John Cournos. Two years before, John had left for London and settled there. He was having, so he wrote Krimmie, "a hell of a time," but thanks to the courtesy of a fellow expatriate, was able to hobble along. "I'll put in a word for you to this man without a country—Ezra Pound. You recall how I wrote to him in the days you were planning the quarterly?" Krimmie nodded to himself and reflected on the romantic way certain names returned to his life.

Pound was then foreign editor of Poetry, and Krimmie read his poems and articles with intense admiration. The man was clearly a fearless propagandist and an exhilarating member of the movement he espoused so aggressively—imagism. He had been gathering, editing and sending to Chicago the poems of H. D., Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, Amy Lowell, Skipwith Cannéll, William Carlos Williams, John Gould Fletcher and others, and seizing any weapon toward clubbing the literary world into a submissive recognition of the worth of these men and women. Vituperation and ridicule joined in denouncing the group in general and Pound in particular. Nowhere was his name held up to greater derision than in the columns of the New York press and the chambers of The Poetry Society. Fortunately for many folk seriously concerned in the future of American poetry, he had found a haven in the paper edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin. The communion between

poet and editors was rarely smooth, and he eventually resigned and turned foreign editor of The Little Review. But while the alliance with the ladies on Cass Street lasted, it was one of the responsible factors in luring the eyes of the hopeful toward Chicago as the potential literary capital of the new America.

One day, shortly before the printing press was due, a bizarre, special-delivery package, post-marked London, arrived in Grantwood. The cover resembled the stout paper butchers use for wrapping meat. Krimmie untied the parcel, and a sheaf of manuscripts of various dimensions, edited with bold, marginal notes and caustic instructions, emerged. A vigorous letter, in a large confident scrawl, warned Krimmie "that unless you're another American ass, you'll set this up just as it stands!" In a postscript, Pound added promises of further material provided The Glebe behaved itself and its editors didn't dash his faith by degenerating into some Puritanical policy. Remy de Gourmont himself had offered a pagan book entitled, The Horses Of Diomedes. "All the old boy asks you to send in reimbursement is the sum of twenty-five dollars to go to his translator, Miss Sartoris." Krimmie readily understood why poets attached themselves to Pound. In a world where most people slavishly coddled their own egos, here was a fellow with a heart and intelligence at the service of other contemporaries.

The pages he held in his hands and leafed over and over were an exotic manifestation of something extraordinarily alive and beautiful. Outside of an Elizabethan lyric by an unknown, named James Joyce, nearly all of the pieces moved without rhyme or a traditional metre. There were even some bits of prose, Chinese prose poems by Allen Upward, and a rollicking satire on the fogs of London by the irrepressible Ponce de Leon, Ford Madox Hueffer. The bulk and most beguiling of the manuscripts had been contributed by H. D., Aldington, Flint, Cannéll and Pound. There was a single poem by Amy

Lowell and a single poem (in the Greek manner) by William Carlos Williams, who, Pound wrote, "is my one remaining pal in America—get in touch with old Bull—he lives in a hole called Rutherford, New Jersey." The title the editor insisted must go on the cover read: Des Imagistes, An Anthology.

Man and Krimmie indulged in a delirious war-dance. They would run these poems as the very first issue of The Glebe. But they were doomed to a tragic disappointment. On a Saturday afternoon, the printing press arrived in a small cart dragged by an aged horse and driven by two wizened men. It had come from down-town Manhattan, across the Fulton Street Ferry, up the Jersey banks of the Hudson, over the Palisades and down to the shack without mishap. Then, in removing the press, the old men were just careless enough to let it slip to the ground between them, and an excited examination disclosed that only the most important parts were broken. If the editors cared to go to a certain expense, the damage could be repaired. But as usual, neither Man nor Krimmie, nor Man and Krimmie combined, had the requisite funds.

Krimmie was inconsolable. Man offered to print the poems by hand and try out his process for issuing facsimiles. But this program would have imposed endless labor on the artist and, in the interim, weeks and months would pass before the anthology reached the public. Krimmie declined Man's generous proposal, sent the whole story to Pound and asked him to wait a little longer. Perhaps he might find a printer in town, a reasonable printer, and start The Glebe that way. Pound sent back a card with the terse phrase, All right, we can wait.

In the early fall, when Krimmie parted with Man and Sam, he returned to 232. He had decided to consult Clark, the printer, for an estimate of the costs of producing just the Imagist collection. Still another accident intervened, a benign one this time. Somebody told him about the latest

activities in town and advised him to call on some of the prime movers.

"Where?" Krimmie asked.

"Down in the village."

He received the news with so puzzled an air, his informant added: "Where have you been? You act like Rip Van Winkle. Haven't you heard of Greenwich Village?"

Krimmie had to shake his head. . . .

II

GREENWICH VILLAGE

Not only had American artists begun to use villages as the subject-matter of their work, but they made awkward, communal efforts toward the formation of small colonies of their own. The desire of congregating in sympathetic groups was a natural development of the craving of solitude for companionship in the wilderness. The fact that most of these colonies quickly fell into mutual admiration societies or herds of bickering porcupines did not detract from the genuineness of the original impulse. The failures simply demonstrated that the average artist is an anti-social person, and when he turns sociable it is usually at the expense of some compromise with his inner being. He was therefore better off in isolated places like Spoon River and Winesburg than he might be in the midst of his kin, where too much love or too much envy tended to soften or harden the integrity of his ego. Nevertheless, the poignant need of the artist in the days of darkness immediately antedating the war called for some point of contact with his fellows, in protection against the prevailing opinion held by American society that such a man was a wastrel, a pariah, a superfluous blot on an otherwise united democracy. Out of the demand for a bit of soil for the free development of the individual, colonies had grown in Carmel by the sea in California, Taos in prehistoric New Mexico, Peterboro in the hills of New Hampshire, Provincetown at the tip of Cape Cod. Krimmie had heard of these places and, on a hasty trip to Boston some years before, wandered among the beautiful remains of their forerunner in the quiet town of Concord on the Merrimac. Treading the circuitous paths of Sleepy Hol-

low, he lingered most of all near the smallest stone in the cemetery, a semi-circular slab marked David, leaning over the burial ground of the hermit of the Concord group, Henry David Thoreau.

The Greenwich Village Krimmie now visited was not a new confraternity. Artists had come there in the past and settled among the unostentatious relics of a primitive aristocracy. At different times, Henry James, William Dean Howells, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, John Masefield, Theodore Dreiser and many others had lived there. It was inevitable, with the arrival of an era of a more concerted consciousness, that the village should draw a heterogeneous host of men and women from all over the country pointing their hobby-horses in the direction of Washington Square. The network of crooked streets surrounding the square was the most charming section of the city. It provided an ideal locality for artists no matter how poverty-stricken. But when the community grew more and more self-conscious, engaged in the national evils of standardized advertising and was exploited by the real estate boomers, it lapsed into a home-town, B. P. O. E. persuasion on a par with Los Angeles. Most of the artists fled elsewhere.

The first haunt Krimmie called at was the Washington Square Bookshop on MacDougall Street. The two proprietors, Albert and Charles Boni, were mere striplings, swarthy, volatile and venturesome. He eyed the fantastic placards and posters on the walls of the shop. Who were these people, these groups—The Liberal Club, Guido Bruno and his garret, The Masses, The New Republic, The Washington Square Players, The Washington Square Gallery, Polly's Restaurant? And these men who came in, the Boni boys introduced him to: Horace Traubel, who never wore a hat or an overcoat, the suave Adonis, Max Eastman, Thomas Seltzer, who turned out to be the boys' uncle, the huge, gentle, one-eyed Bill Heywood, John Reed, whom everybody adoringly called Jack? And the

masculine Henrietta Rodman, the histrionic Helen Westley, the Chinese dowager, Bee Shostac, the polemical Margaret Sanger? How long had this been going on? Had his friend been right in dubbing him Rip?

The Bonis gossiped about the aims of the two new magazines, The New Republic and The Masses, and pointed out the three latest magazines from London, The New Freewoman (soon to be changed to The Egoist), Poetry and Drama, and Rhythm. He wondered whether he ought not tell the boys about The Glebe, but was side-tracked by an invitation to attend a general meeting of The Washington Square Players for the purpose of discussing ways and means of establishing a little theatre for the production of one-act plays. The group had put on an occasional play, usually concerning this new theme, sex, in one of the rooms of The Liberal Club, while the audience sat in the other. There was no scenery, and except for some chairs and an occasional table, props were taboo. The general meeting took place at Ida Rauh's studio, but as Krimmie had nothing immediate to contribute to the group, he drifted into the background and never attended another meeting. But he had enjoyed listening to the leaders of the venture, Edward Goodman, Sam Eliot, Jr., Philip Moeller, Lucy Huffaker, Helen Westley, Ida Rauh, and was delighted to learn that they had rented a little theatre uptown, The Bandbox, for their opening season of public productions. Patriotic villagers decried this move and maintained that The Washington Square Players should have rented and renovated one of the stables on MacDougall Street. It remained for The Provincetown Players to attempt this experiment a few years later.

Down in Polly's Restaurant, Krimmie met other pioneers of the village, and among them no man afforded more amusement than the big blond Bohemian, Guido Bruno. This eccentric finally proved the greatest menace to the village itself, and his garret on Washington Square brought down the wrath of the

older settlers. It was he who started the advertising boom and enticed hopefuls and charlatans from all parts of the country by spreading lurid propaganda throughout his various sheets, The Greenwich Village Weekly, The Bruno Chapbooks and Bruno's Weekly. Krimmie also visited another haunt, The Washington Square Gallery, founded by the late Robert J. Coady. The pugnacious, red-headed Irishman not only had incisive ideas about modern art, but, a year or two later, founded an aggressive magazine called The Soil, which ran through five brilliant numbers and more or less prophesied the advent of several subsequent publications. Of all the haunts, however, Krimmie returned most frequently to The Boni Bookshop.

He now had several conferences with the Bonis with reference to The Glebe, as a result of which the boys agreed to finance the venture and let him edit it. He wrote a short manifesto on the aims of the venture, while the new publishers struck off placards bearing Ray's abstract design and arguing the novel benefits of one-man shows in the American magazine field. They also planned to bind a few hundred copies of each number in boards and sell them at a dollar a copy. Like Krimmie, the Bonis had some manuscripts to submit for discussion, and out of deference to them as new publishers he agreed that the honor of introducing the idea should go to a man in California who had sent in his collected poems for Albert and Charles to read. His name was George Cronyn. The second issue recalled The American Quarterly; it was devoted to the one-act comedy by Charles Demuth, the painter. Then followed, in some sort of monthly succession, Des Imagistes, Krimmie's novelette, Erna Vitek, the Collects of Walt Whitman's friend and conservator, Horace Traubel, and the pathetic autobiography of Wallace E. Baker, The Diary Of A Suicide. Young Baker, thoroughly disheartened with America, the literary game and the attendant hardships of

earning his livelihood, had mailed this document to B. Russell Herts, "that it may help, if published in part or whole, to ease the way for some who come after." Then he went down to one of the New York pleasure resorts, strode out into the sea and shot himself. The desperately courageous entries in the journal passed from Herts (no longer editor of The Forum) to Leonard D. Abbott, an editor of Current Opinion, and from Abbott to Krimmie. Baker won considerable posthumous glory for a while and then his sole literary record vanished like himself.

With the entrance of a play from the Russian, Andreyev's Love Of One's Neighbor, translated by Thomas Seltzer, Krimmie began to lose interest in The Glebe. Notwithstanding his love for the expressions of modern Europe, he felt that his job as an editor, actual or potential, consisted in pursuing the ideal he had set himself from the start: the continued discovery and advancement of the unknowns on this side of the Atlantic. But the tremendous influx of translations from abroad had set in, and the Bonis, quite right from their point of view, wished to foster it in The Glebe. With the next two issues, translations by Sam Eliot, Jr., of plays by Frank Wedekind, Erdgeist and Pandora's Box, Krimmie resigned. Incidentally, these were the last issues of The Glebe, and the Bonis retired from the publishing field, until, a few years later, they joined a certain handsome, adventurous gentleman in the formation of the firm of Boni and Liveright.

Meanwhile, Guido Bruno had devoted three of his Chapbooks to Krimmie's writings: a group of slender poems called Mushrooms, a group still more slender, To My Mother, and finally the notorious Edna. Krimmie realized he was courting antagonism in allowing his first poems to be issued by the Bohemian sensation-monger; nor were there any financial considerations in the transaction. But they were things the new editors had rejected, and Krimmie, fairly weary of

the ineffectual trips down to his mail-box, decided to give them away rather than wait forever for the recognition of editorial minds. Bruno was delighted with the poems. His florid speeches were such strange elements in Krimmie's experience, and he was so anxious to rid his desk of these things and get some perspective on them in cold type, that he resigned himself to Bruno's methods.

The sixteen mushrooms met with instantaneous disapprobation. The town guffawed over them, while colyumists and their readers outvied one another in contriving grotesque parodies and vitriolic commentaries. Krimmie more or less enjoyed his sudden notoriety, though some of the attacks hurt him secretly. They ridiculed intimate confessions he had committed to paper in momentary moods of sorrow. In some curious way whose subconscious workings had developed a spirit of detachment, he was able to see his sorrows as the antics of a being somewhat foreign to himself. He expressed some of his moods in a mode of the frankest comedy, no matter how profound the suffering which had motivated the writing. He found this so-called comedy an egregiously difficult medium. It would have been easier to say outright how badly he was feeling. But this would not have taken into consideration the fact that he saw his suffering in relation to his surroundings. He recognized himself as only one of many egos struggling for room and recognition and, by a transference of the personal self to the worldly, achieved that aloofness which he felt to be the essence of the comic consciousness. He was not amazed, therefore, that people laughed at his mushrooms.

He would have liked it better had they reasoned about their laughter and analysed the possible motives which had set him to playing with his emotions. But this would have been asking too much at once. There might come a time when readers would discover that there is nothing so tragic as comedy. Until that awareness arrived, he must be content with the impression

his work had made and maintain the strictest silence no matter how tempting the provocation for saying something in his own defence. He derived considerable consolation from a laughing philosopher he happened to be reading. "We have more poets than judges and interpreters of poetry. It is easier to write than to understand." This was certainly as true of the America in which he was living as it was of the France of the era of Michel de Montaigne. He felt that he had no right to ask for more so early in a game so new to them all. . . .

III

INTRICATELY WEBBED

KRIMMIE soon appeared in still another rôle: on the lecture platform. He made his debut in Bruno's garret and chanted some of his mushrooms in a voice no louder than a whisper to twenty-five odd-looking people who paid ten cents a head for whatever it was they could hear. The entire proceeds were turned over to him. Despite the ordeal of addressing an audience, he determined to try it again. He even had visions of earning his living that way. But for his next two recitals—at the Boni shop, where he spoke on American poetry, and at The Liberal Club, where he spoke on Debussy and pumped a pianola to illustrate his talk—he received nothing, since there was no admission charge. As his funds were approaching zero once more, he decided to step off the platform and look about for another job.

Luckily, one of his parodists, a young man named Ted Lewis, who had sent several things he called "toadstools" to Don Marquis and F. P. A., came to his assistance. He was the son of the editor of The Morning Telegraph, and on the staff of that paper, another young man, the cartoonist, Oscar Frederick Howard, had a personal interest in Krimmie. In Polly's Restaurant, Krimmie met Howard, and he introduced him to Lewis, and the author of the toadstools turned him over to a man named James, Sunday editor of the Telegraph, and James asked him whether he had any ideas for full-page Sunday stories. Of course, Krimmie had ideas. "Bring them in as fast as you can," James requested.

Three to four thousand words at a time, Krimmie brought in the stories. James accepted them without a demur. Oscar

Frederick illustrated them, and they appeared on an average of alternate Sundays. As to thematic material, the editor left Krimmie to his own discretion, with the single proviso that his work contain elements of "human interest." The author of Mushrooms utilized the opportunity of writing about individuals and haunts he believed in: Stieglitz and 291, Traubel, Capablanca, Coady and his gallery, the Bonis, Man Ray, Billy Luks and the dispensary on Waverly Place, and under the caption, The Joys Of Being A Mongrel, added a series of studies of people of the streets: shopkeepers, panhandlers, sandwich men, tramps. For these full-page spreads he earned a fairly regular income and it helped considerably. A period came when he was able to say: I've saved enough to assure myself of three free months ahead. These three months would give him just enough leisure to compose the first draft of a short novel he had in mind. By dropping everything else he might be able to complete the draft before his thirtieth birthday. And present it to Tommy—in dedication.

The book was to concern himself from childhood up to the day he had met Tommy; then Tommy and himself; and then . . . But he wasn't quite clear about the *dénouement*. A novel, yes; but as far as he was concerned and she was concerned, a sort of reticent confession. He planned to call it, Arthur.

Their life together was now an echo. Even Tommy had grown a little cool and evasive. He wanted simply to rehearse the bare essentials and detect and state if he could what was wrong between them. Since they had persistently eschewed direct issues for fear of hurting each other, he thought the protective coloration of art might provide the means of telling her ever so gently what he wanted to tell her. Then perhaps it would turn out that there was still something they could do about it.

He had enough leisure for a first draft if he applied himself

indefatigably. Or a sufficient number of chapters to read aloud now and then and show her the drift of his thought. She wouldn't have to say much. Very likely, she wouldn't say anything. But something might still happen, were it only a touch out of two solitudes, no longer meeting as they had ten years ago, and most of the time ever since. It would take a lot of courage to dig into himself, and a lot of courage for her to listen. He knew he was going to falter, not once, but often, and felt an intolerable loneliness as he viewed the work ahead. The pages before him and the pencil he held gave him not the slightest companionship. The contact all through must be one between two selves, his past and present. He would have to preserve a severe impersonality and portray Ollie and his descendancy in the light of the utmost impartiality.

He began the book with a chapter in which Ollie reads aloud to Emma to the tune of Monte Cristo's "the world is mine." Then he hurried on, like a man in a nightmare, hoping the morrow would save him from the demon pursuing him, and bring back the sun, and Tommy at the door, greeting him as she no longer greeted him. And they would embrace and hold each other just as he tried to describe it in the book, at the close of a chapter in which they had come to this very room for the first time, and stood at the window looking out toward a horizon surrounding a future belonging to them alone. And as he tried to fathom the future and say something about it, she would call him back to where they were standing with—"never mind, dear." And he would turn to her, see the look in her quiet eyes—just as it was in the book. And they would be the book once more and themselves once more. . . .

Krimmie finished the first draft on the eve of his birthday. A turmoil of complications ensued. Instead of simplifying the relation between the two, the story made them all the more aware of lives no longer interdependent. The final cadence of the manuscript, ecstasy and hope intoning their tribute to a

woman, could not hide certain echoes, shadowing the major joyousness and gratitude with the minor accents of a brave, reluctant epitaph. The lovers acknowledged nothing of the kind to each other. But they made more and more of silence as a means of communication. Delicate days of tender consideration followed. They lowered the past and tried to make of the present something akin to what had gone. But the relation was a pale apparition, less than a sentient entity. They sat like two familiars rearing an abstract stranger resembling each other. And in their effort to console each other without words and still reach each other, they grew more and more like the two beings Krimmie discovered in the sestet of a sonnet many years later—

> "Too intricately webbed with misery,
> Too far apart and helpless with despair,
> They wait they know not for what wizardry
> To touch each other, vivify, repair
> And join the lonely beings that they are
> A little closer to the one they were. . . ."

IV

OTHERS

Several events and encounters followed in rapid succession. A lively paper called Rogue appeared in the village, smacking of the 1890's in London, but with an audacious note of its own contributed by writers Krimmie had never heard of: Donald Evans, Carl Van Vechten, Mina Loy, Walter Conrad Arensberg, Wallace Stevens and the editors, Louise and Allan Norton. Oddly enough, he was familiar with the work of the most radical member of the group, Gertrude Stein. Simultaneously with the publication of his Love And Life, the Grafton Press had issued her Three Lives, containing the most remarkable negro story Krimmie had ever read: Melanctha.

He received an unexpected note from Allan Norton which he fingered and thumbed with pleasure. It was the first time an editor had asked him to send in some poems and the first time an editor offered to pay for them. The note was positively friendly. Norton accepted a group of the mushrooms Krimmie submitted, enclosed a handsome check and invited him to call and meet some of the other contributors. "There's one man who wants to meet you particularly. He admires your chess as well as your poetry." Krimmie swore at the chess refrain, but gratefully accepted the invitation. Taking it for granted from the writings in Rogue that the Norton set must be aristocratic, he attired himself in his Sunday suit, sponged and pressed for the occasion.

Of the poems he had read in Rogue, the thing he liked best was a bit of vers libre called Tea, by Wallace Stevens:

"When the elephant's ear in the park
Shrivelled in frost,

And the leaves on the paths
Ran like rats . . ."

Colyumists had riddled it so often alongside things of his own that he felt a fellowship with the author and on the way to the Nortons hoped most of all to meet him. He visualized a slender, ethereal being, shy and sensitive. The man he was introduced to was shy and sensitive, but so broad-shouldered and burly that Krimmie was overawed. He tried to refer to Tea, but the tall man waved a deprecating hand and muttered something sounding like "Jesus." Norton drew Krimmie aside and explained: "Cornering Wallace about his own work isn't done." He thanked his host and vowed never to address the giant about his own work again, nor about anything else for that matter.

Hearsay had it that the Nortons were the handsomest young couple in town. Sitting in bashfulness and looking from Louise to Allan and Allan to Louise, Krimmie agreed with hearsay, and looking from Fania Marinoff to Carl Van Vechten, from Donald Evans to Walter Conrad Arensberg (the man who admired his chess), with a sidelong glance at the redoubtable Mina Loy, he added the thought, the handsomest set in town. So as not to appear outside the circle, he tried to hold his tea cup nonchalantly and assumed a casual air whenever he was addressed. He even ventured to mimic the languorous speech which, he learned later on, all men acquire at Harvard. As his ear soon detected that what sounded natural in the other men about the room was affected in his case, he dropped the drawl. Louise Norton came over and praised the poems he had contributed to Rogue. But when she accented their "naïve sophistication," he thought she might be chaffing him. He gradually discovered that paradox was the usual mode of intercourse here. As he accustomed himself to his surroundings and forgot his own situation, he was almost sure that the

indirect method of speech adopted by each person present betrayed an æsthetic fastidiousness in the matter of living as well as of expressing art. Pre-eminently, this seemed to apply to Wallace Stevens, and while Krimmie had not made up his mind to approach the tall one again, he concluded that the author of Tea wore his self-deprecation as a protective mantle. Clearly, these people respected one another, and their guarded phrases paid tribute accordingly. Thus at least Krimmie, imprisoned in his own aloofness, assured himself. It was a new sensation he enjoyed to the full.

Before the end of the session, he found himself sitting near Arensberg and humored his neighbor's whim for talking chess. The latter was concerned with the theories of the game rather than contests over the board and divulged a temperament so susceptible to its æsthetic and philosophic aspects that Krimmie responded cordially. As a result of their meeting a friendship arose which laid the foundation of another experiment in poetry.

Arensberg had a beautiful studio on West Sixty-seventh Street. It was the rendezvous and he the idol of his friends. He had been collecting paintings, drawings and sculpture by Picasso, Duchamp, Gleizes and Brancusi, and thanks to the presence of Duchamp and Gleizes in New York at the time, developed into an authority on modern tendencies. A scholar and classicist in every fibre, Walter proved his catholicity by experimenting with free verse and had produced with the utmost care a poem *à la Mallarmé,* Voyage à l'Infini, and a translation of Mallarmé's L'Après-Midi d'un Faune. One evening, not long after their meeting at the Nortons, he invited Krimmie to dinner, and after dinner they took a long walk. Chess had passed into limbo.

Mutual interests came to the surface, reserved and critical on Walter's side, reckless and irrepressible on Krimmie's. Their stroll led them to the studio just west of Central Park.

They continued to talk until exhaustion overtook them, toward two or three in the morning. Krimmie was asked to stay over night. Four or five hours later, Walter knocked at the door of his room. They hastily breakfasted, retired to the studio and started all over again.

Arensberg was passionately fond of Pound and the Imagists, asked many pertinent questions about the Imagist issue in The Glebe, confided that Rogue would never do, couldn't last in any event, and what was needed in America was a poetry magazine, not like Poetry in Chicago, which admitted too many compromises, but a paper dedicating its energies to experiment throughout. He wondered if such a venture was feasible and whether Krimmie would join him in it. The latter was sure it was feasible, and before the evening closed, plans were already under way. Krimmie promised to get in touch once more with Pound and other poets he knew, and to consult a printer he had recently met who called himself Mr. Liberty. They had decided on a magazine limited to sixteen pages and five hundred copies per issue. "We'll have Wallace Stevens and Mina Loy to begin with," Walter declared. "They alone," Krimmie interrupted, "would create the paper we have in mind." "So would you," Walter added; "so would you," responded Krimmie.

Walter, reticent to a fault, was anxious to stay in the background. He did not wish to commit himself to a policy that could not be revised after maturer consideration. Krimmie, who never had anything to lose, was forced to take the initiative. It was therefore his charge to compose the rough draft of a manifesto, the shorter the better, discuss it with his friend and, if possible, arrive at some understanding with him as to a title. He went home, worked on a paragraph embodying their mutual ideal, and cut it and cut it until all that remained was the sentence, "The old expressions are with us always, and there are always others." He then hurried back to the studio.

Walter approved of the concise inclusiveness of the sentence, although in his quizzical fashion he questioned the efficacy of the word "and." For a while "but" was examined and tested, only to fall before the more approximate truthfulness of the broader conjunction. With one accord, the two men pounced on the very last word as the title of the venture.

Others was merely to print the work of men and women who were trying themselves in the new forms. A principle of rigid privacy was determined upon. There was to be in no sense of the word a group. Poets as yet unknown were to be asked to submit material alongside poets of repute. There would be no financial inducement for contributing; and the editors had no idea or concern as to whether the paper would sell or not. They vaguely hoped to distribute the five hundred copies but had no definite scheme of distribution. First and last, they were concerned with the gathering of manuscripts, a task Krimmie had in hand for the most part, and the selection of stock papers, covers, type, etc., in which Walter accepted the lead. They had already agreed on some shade of goldenrod for the cover.

The more often they met, the finer were the samples Walter had collected and spread out on the floor of the studio. He was now reaching out for Fabriano papers, irresistible creams and ivories with voluptuous contours and textures. His memory fresh with the extravagance of the Quarterly, Musical Advance and The Glebe, Krimmie tried to dissuade Walter from these temptations. But his hypersensitive ally looked more and more askance on cheap substances. This was to be a thing with a physical ideal as austere as the one which must govern the choice of manuscripts. As Walter had generously assumed the responsibility of the costs of the venture, Krimmie was under the embarrassment of not being able to argue this feature on what might be termed an equal footing. Walter was dubious about the artistry of the hybrid printer, Mr.

Liberty, and wanted to confer with distinguished craftsmen like Bruce Rogers, Gowdy, the De Vinne Press. If this irksome situation developed, it would force the friends to split. And considering their opposed backgrounds, they were bound to disagree with respect to many of the manuscripts. They stood in absolute harmony before the poems of Walter's old classmate, Stevens. And after several conferences, they managed to find mutual preferences among the poems of Mina Loy at one extreme and those of Mary Carolyn Davies at the other. But the rest of the time, contrasts of temperament, as well as of training, engendered a gradual uneasiness. Walter's ideal was more lofty, exacting; Krimmie's more liberal, humane. Walter was still a classicist; Krimmie a romantic. At heart, the former continued to live in the past, the latter in the future. Each, however, was an utter fanatic for things of the spirit, and their devotion, so long as it held to a mutual love for the new shoots emerging from the American soil, kept them inseparable in fundamentals.

A temporary intermission ensued. In the early summer, Walter, who could never bear the heat of New York, left town. Tommy had gone to the Rockies once more, and Krimmie, likewise anxious to escape New York and not knowing which way to turn, consulted Stieglitz. The photographer advised him to appeal to Charles Caffin, the art critic.

"Caffin and his family spend their summers in Connecticut at an artists' colony called Silvermine. I've a notion you and he would get along. . . ."

V

SILVERMINE

KRIMMIE had met the art critic at the Holland House luncheons and liked this English gentleman of the old school who took such an interest in the younger American artists and argued their cause in Mr. Hearst's New York American. Caffin was pleased with the idea that Krimmie spend the summer in Silvermine and invited him to meet Mrs. Caffin and discuss it with her. Caroline Caffin, fully as English as her husband and even more youthful in her tastes and responsiveness, welcomed him cordially.

A week later, Krimmie accompanied the family to their place in Connecticut. Here, in the easy-going hospitality he enjoyed at their hands and was never made to feel conscious of, he found a home in the midst of natural cultural surroundings. The Caffins were former members of the Benson players in England, and later of the Ben Greet players. Both had forsaken the stage, but neither had lost his passion for it. Caroline Caffin was now involved as a helpful influence in the development of latent talents about her. She had had quite a little to do with the earlier training of Ruth St. Denis, and was identified with Mary Shaw, Edith Wynne Matthison and others in the activities of The New York Drama League.

In Krimmie's case, Mrs. Caffin proved to be what people like to term "a second mother." In the short dialogues he wrote in free verse and continued to dub mushrooms, she said she saw the nucleus of a new type of playwriting, and assured him that she could visualize pantomimes as an interpretation of his tone-poems on the mandolute. A varied repertoire of tone-poems had been added to the original serenade. These

he played and chanted to the Caffins after tea in the mellow gardens between the house in which they lived and the barn the art critic had converted into a studio he shared with Krimmie. The older and younger man worked in serene independence, and one of the pleasantest phases of the afternoon at the close of a strenuous day was the habit they had formed of performing for their audience, Mrs. Caffin. Occasionally, Caffin read aloud from some newly published play by Galsworthy, Dusany or Yeats, and thrilled Krimmie with the gusto he brought to the lines and the refinement of his delineation of the characters. The gardens were temporarily converted into an outdoor theatre, and Krimmie's passion for the stage reached an active, concentrated form. The barn was crowded with books on the art of the theatre, and among these he came across the designs and writings of still another Englishman who was to influence his development: Gordon Craig.

The life he led in Silvermine quieted the wanderlust in Krimmie. More and more he realized the need of living with nature and turning his back on the city. There was no creature stranger to the ways of woods and of meadows than himself. He thought with sorrow of the advantages anybody born in the country had over him. But he was now enough of a philosopher not to waste much energy in regretting what was not to be sensibly regretted. Grateful for the life that had been given him at all, he felt that chance came to a man after the most devious apprenticeship. *Clichés* of the seasons had shown him that nature was leisurely in expressing herself, and one tiny entity must be childish indeed to expect to do things or to have things happen in a hurry. Every path he trod, every tree he walked under confided this simple secret. So at least he fancied. He was fond of repeating the favorite maxim of Voltaire's Candide—One must cultivate one's own garden. And of adding—even though the soil lie somewhere beneath the pavements of metropolitan streets.

He wrote a number of tone-poems on pastoral themes. Mrs. Caffin insisted that something must be done with them at once and declared she had a certain protégé in the colony, one of the daughters of an architect, who might be trained to interpret some of them. On afternoons when Caffin wasn't busy, they could use the barn for rehearsals and, whether Christine succeeded or not, learn once for all whether dancing to a combination of poetry and music was practicable. But first Krimmie must see her dance. Along with other young members of the colony, she was to undertake an outdoor recital in the moonlight. One hoped there would be a full moon and no clouds or rain. "I've taught her conventional things to start with," Mrs. Caffin warned him; "so you mustn't mind if you have to hear Schubert's Moment Musicale." Krimmie promised he wouldn't mind.

A full moon appeared. Such clouds as there were enhanced rather than threatened the scene, and the program passed undisturbed on a smooth green knoll tucked away in a semicircle of trees. But Krimmie discovered he did mind the Moment Musicale and wondered why everybody who danced *à la Isadora* could find nothing else to dance to. He paid only the most casual attention to Mrs. Caffin's protégé. She wore the usual white chiffons, danced with the usual grace and was applauded with the customary courtesy. He politely joined in the hand-clapping, so politely that Christine's younger sister, Margaret, who sat next to him throughout the program, was openly disappointed. Before Christine's entrance, Margaret had challenged him, possibly in reply to certain attentions the moon had led him into: "Wait till you see my sister." Well, he had seen her—not distinctly to be sure—only to revert to Margaret.

"You must come to our house-party tomorrow and meet her," she said, still more chagrined with Krimmie. Looking forward to meeting Margaret again, he accepted. "Mother"

Caffin promised to escort him. At the house-party, when he was introduced to Christine, he didn't recognize her as the dancer of the evening before. A slender, athletic girl, just below his own height, looked up and greeted him with shy brown almond-shaped eyes in whose depths lay an affectionate smile. As she turned to some other guests, he noticed her soft, chestnut hair, her straight, warm mouth and the gentle way she carried herself. For some reason, he began to think of trees, streams, a bird, sunshine, rain—until Margaret interrupted his reverie. "There's a great deal to be said—for what you said last night," he confessed to her with an absent-minded air. Presently, he found Christine again and watched her gracefully helping guests to tea. He stationed himself near enough to the group so that she would have to come to him with the next cup. He wanted to say something, but took a cup instead and mumbled his thanks. She went on to the next guest and he watched her again. He was so surprised with himself that he set down his tea somewhere and retired into the background. Instead of analysing his emotion, he hastily searched for a scrap of paper and scrawled something on it. There were only six words, each a monosyllable——

"Till you came—
I was I."

On the way home from the party, Mrs. Caffin inquired whether he thought Christine had possibilities.

"Possibilities?" he echoed, glad of the length of the word. "Perhaps. . . ."

The rehearsals they now undertook in the Caffin studio, Krimmie chanting and playing, Christine dancing under the guidance of Mrs. Caffin, were not strictly objective. There were times when the troubadour's eye strayed from the mandolute and his thought from art to something less detached.

And there were times, in the course of a pantomime around a graveyard and lovers who had come to bury their love, when Christine smiled and destroyed the sombre mood. Mrs. Caffin, with her discreet sense of humor, must have known that interpreting tone-poems was not the sole interest between these two, but she maintained a proper gravity throughout each rehearsal. And what that courteous critic didn't know might have been imparted by a tennis court where Christine and Krimmie volleyed at each other. Or certain paths in certain woods, and stumps of fallen trees.

It was while they were sitting on such a stump that Christine confessed, if there weren't someone else, and he echoed, if there weren't someone else. She seemed to find their coincidental predicament remarkably droll and laughed at his long face. Her action had a boyish note so compatible with the rest of her that he readily forgave her amusement, especially as he detected behind it a serious regard for the situation. She had a serene faith in life which made it impossible for her to consider any of its ingredients tragically, and yet she was conscious that the solution of the dilemma confronting them lay primarily with her. The someone in her life had left for Rome three years before to study art and, more than incidentally, catholicism. She had a feeling that he might have gone for good. His letters were less and less frequent and he was becoming more and more absorbed in the priesthood. Throughout her recital, a quiet undercurrent sounded her absolute loyalty to the man. Krimmie tried to joke about it by saying that as far as Catholics were concerned, why go all the way to Rome or wait for one to return when she had such an excellent example sitting right next to her. "A fine Catholic you are!" she bantered him.

When he learned she was studying catholicism and being instructed by Charles in the ritual, he realized the seriousness of a future with her. Her affectionate reaction to the manifes-

tations of life within her youthful grasp showed that her regard for any person in particular would carry her to extremes. Anybody who cared for her—and most everybody did—was sure to receive a response commensurate with their own emotion. In a joyous sense, she was in love with everybody, like a child opening out to every new touch. In the worldly connotation, she had not grown up, although she was about twenty-five at the time. She had a way, then, of giving herself to any man, woman or child who needed her, and it was precisely this need of her in Krimmie, more perhaps than any other factor of passion or love, which swayed her toward him.

He was finding an outlet to his own stunted youth in an environment of woods and fields miraculously foreign to the streets of his past. He was flooded with the teens of existence at a period, no doubt, when other men of his age were beginning to consider their thirties. And, sad fellow though he knew himself to be at heart, the sheer happiness of Christine's nature affected him profoundly. She inspired him to a feverish succession of bits like the first he had written about her. He called them Variations, and she loved them.

If anything, her family, especially her father, who was as much like her as she was like him, sanctioned Krimmie's courtship. The old man's affection for him was as youthful as Christine's, and Krimmie was invited to spend a week or two in the early autumn at the white house "Daddy" himself had planned and built. When the Caffins returned to New York, he accepted the invitation and was cordially shown to a cosy den with a fireplace, overlooking the Connecticut hills. New England in the fall of the year, with its bewitching color and mystery, beckoned to the lovers. Every element in the sky, air and earth conspired against loyalties. Once more a full moon, not entirely unrelated to the moon of a summer night, innocently supplied the *coup de grâce*. And the woods gave

the wanderers the solitude they required for saying what it was they had to say.

When Krimmie went back to 232, the utmost happiness and the most poignant misery accompanied him. There was a short note from Tommy in the mail-box. She had just come back from the Rockies and would be down some time that afternoon. The high room in which he waited for her slowly turned to a dungeon. The light that came in at the window picked out each intimate corner and accentuated his gloom. Bits of misshapen memories joined in a dirge devoid of consolation.

When she came she did not notice his mood, nor try to fathom his evasiveness. They sat down together and after the longest, heaviest, most grievous silence he had ever known, he managed to start telling her. Suddenly he found her in tears, her face radiant, and heard her say: "You too?" He couldn't believe what he heard. "Do you mean?" he stammered. She nodded, blushed and hid her head on his shoulder.

"Tell me about him," he demanded, but she demurred, "You come first."

"But you went to the Rockies long before I went to Connecticut?"

They attacked each other light-heartedly—for the first time in years, it seemed. The walls of the room fairly rocked to the rhythm of it. Then the two people fell into a queer silence and the room returned to its quietude.

"Shall we go for a walk?" he suggested.

She acquiesced, stood in front of the mirror and pinned on her hat. He helped her on with her coat. There was something he wanted to say more than anything he had ever said before. But he had to say it with an old-fashioned kiss. Tommy pressed his arm tenderly. He opened the door, she passed out into the hall, and he locked the door behind them and followed her down the stairs. They went down silently,

passed the letter-box and stepped out into the street. For the first time they forgot their precaution of separating at the door. He took her by the arm and they walked toward Silsbee's.

Tommy made a timid, farewell request to which Krimmie agreed—as far as he was concerned.

"You don't think she'll mind?" Tommy added.

"No, dear—not at all."

One day not many days later, he discovered himself sitting between those two: shy Tommy on one side of a tea table, shy Christine on the other. Feeling decidedly uncomfortable—very old and very young—he looked from one to the other. Apparently, the pair had no concern with him. At the height of whatever it was they were talking about, when Tommy, with the most naïve air imaginable, asked Christine to accept a small, gold ring, he nearly fell under the table. "Good Lord," he muttered, but they seemed to understand such a rite so much better than he, that he said no more. He caught Christine accepting the ring and looked down at his cup of tea. Whatever followed followed without his seeing it. He abruptly excused himself and left the table for a while. When he came back, he heard those two talking like animated friends, and what they were saying was utterly irrelevant. He sat down with a bewildered air. They turned to him with one accord.

"What is it?" Christine requested.

"I resign," he responded.

"You'd better," Tommy concluded.

And those two laughed.

The next day, Krimmie received a note from Tommy. He managed to answer it somehow. But he never heard from her again. Not even when she married the man "out west." If she ever married him at all. . . .

VI

STILL ANOTHER VENTURE

CHRISTINE's father asked the lovers to wait a year. To this they agreed so that Krimmie might have time to amass something in the nature of an income. The intermittent Telegraph stories would fall considerably short of supplying the needs of two people and a household. Even he, in his most impractical mood, could see that. They could live comparatively cheaply in Grantwood by renting a shack like the Halpert-Ray combination, but this would never do for what he had in mind. What he had in mind was simply something worthy of their romantic betrothal. He loved to fancy there had never been another to compare with it and that only some special place had the right to house it. But his thought clung to Grantwood in case of a pressing emergency.

In the midst of Krimmie's cogitations, she showed him a note from Rome. It was in answer to a long letter of hers and hastily assured her that Charles was happy in what had taken place and there must be no anxiety about him. Krimmie joined her in raving about Charles and lost his head completely. So did Christine. They wanted to run off somewhere and marry at once. But this would never do. She had promised her father; so had he. Besides, if they waited till the fall, Daddy would help. There was a fine old suite of mahogany for one thing. And a handsome set of rugs for another. Krimmie was against accepting help from anybody. This was a matter solely for him to decide. But he decided it with absolute abandonment. Other complications arising in rapid succession aggravated his excitement.

The European upheaval was now six months old and going

stronger every day. There were rumors that even America might be dragged in. Most Americans had already enlisted their sympathies with the allies notwithstanding a lot of noble talk and writing about strict neutrality. Krimmie didn't side with the Germans, as his father's blood might have prompted him. He hated the whole *débâcle* with its unprecedented destruction of people and the countries they had built and clung to. In his ecstatic state, love was the only thing, life the only thing, nothing else mattered. He wrote impassioned songs against war and death. Nobody listened to them; they didn't get into print; even radical journals rejected them. In his furious extravagance, he imagined that love songs could put an end to war. But he soon saw that songs which got into print, by men equally impassioned might as well have been written in water.

Spring had returned, or rather arrived, in a particularly appealing mood. There was no living alone in the cooped-up house of a cramped New York. And Walter Arensberg came back with a complete change of heart toward Others. He wished to retire from the magazine, but without embarrassing Krimmie, who had committed himself to various obligations with respect to the venture. Walter generously offered to underwrite the printer's estimate for one year. Mr. Liberty, the energetic anarchist who came down from the Bronx to consult Krimmie, promised to print five hundred copies of each issue, goldenrod cover and all, at cost. He refused to earn a cent on what he called "redicals" and submitted an estimate at the absurdly low figure of twenty-three dollars a month. Krimmie accepted Walter's offer heartily and gratefully. His friend likewise contributed his poem, Voyage à l'Infini.

Christine and Krimmie started their life together on thirty dollars he had saved plus a continued promise of intermittent Sunday articles. He had rented a two-room shack with a kitchenette, not far from the Halpert-Ray studio, at eight dol-

lars a month, and, in a moment of supreme foresight, had shipped his bits of furniture all the way over from Fourteenth Street. These, with some essential odds and ends they procured at Woolworth's, comprised their establishment at the outset. The Caffins contributed a set of dishes, Christine's parents nothing. For this they were not to be censured. The young couple had eloped.

On a heartrendingly beautiful morning, after buying a wedding ring at the same five and ten cent store, much to the amusement of the salesgirl on one side of the counter and Christine on the other, the lovers boarded a subway express marked City Hall. They were accompanied by Caroline Caffin. Down town, in one of the unromantic rooms set aside for such a purpose, they were married by a justice of the peace. Later in the day, hanging their heads more like children than culprits, they reported at Daddy's office on Fifth Avenue. They didn't have to tell him what they had done. Nor did he have to tell them what he felt.

In the evening, not a little saddened, they had a quiet wedding dinner at the Caffins', and at night, a veritable *Frühlingsnacht,* took the long road on a Riverside bus uptown, crossed the Hudson on the Fort Lee Ferry, boarded a slow car marked Grantwood, got off, walked the two-mile walk through the darkness and silence, and entered the shack and all it held. . . .

They had barely settled down to their life on the western slope of the Palisades, when the first issue of Others appeared. The date read, July, 1915. Obviously, with the possible exception of August, July was the worst month in the year for starting a new magazine—that is, if one expected to distribute it. But the new editor had not embarked on the publication with the idea of selling it. Certainly not to the wholesale degree of placing copies in the hands of agencies for bookshops, news-

stands and railroad stations throughout America. He had put a price on the magazine, fifteen cents a copy and a dollar and a half a year, and figured, whenever he figured at all, that an eventual sale of two to three hundred copies or the subscriptions of two to three hundred people would help it pay for itself. In the pages of the magazine, no appeal to subscribers appeared, and no editorial pronouncement. Only the motto, "the old expressions, etc.," and a table of contents impinged upon the space to be silently devoted to the contributors themselves. It was a policy too chaste to appeal to any but the most private circles.

However, the first issue had been "on the market" but a week when a small-sized riot ensued. News columns, doubtless short of copy in July, seized upon the contributors with hilarity. Before the second issue came off the press, "the little yellow dog," as someone hailed the paper, had earned a reputation bordering on infamy. Travesties, ballyragging, every conceivable form of ridicule, appeared far and wide. The two favorite victims of these attacks were Mina Loy and Orrick Johns, the former because of her sardonic love song beginning—

> "Spawn of fantasies
> Sitting the appraisable
> Pig Cupid his rosy snout
> Rooting erotic garbage. . . ."

and the latter because of his self-confessed parodies of Krimmie's mushrooms: things which Orrick styled Olives.

Detractors shuddered at Mina Loy's subject-matter and derided her elimination of punctuation marks and the audacious spacing of her lines. These technical factors not only crop up in a later poet, E. E. Cummings, to whose originality later critics have attributed them, but were learned by Mina

during a lengthy sojourn in Paris and Florence, where she came under the influence of Guillaume Apollinaire and F. T. Marinetti. Mina had simply transferred futuristic theories to America, and in her subject-matter had gone about expressing herself freely—another continental influence. In Orrick's case, critics resented the St. Louisan's departure from his country rhymes—beautiful beyond peradventure—and Krimmie agreed that the man with the melodious basso profondo had no superior in the field of lyrical composition. But he could see no reason why his neighbor (Orrick had rented a shack just above Krimmie's) should not experiment with new forms, even in the preliminary mood of parody. He had therefore published fourteen of the olives in a row.

Toward the editor in person, the opposition indulged its rancor by lampooning the lower case letters at the beginning of most, if not all of the lines of his Variations. He had merely followed the natural inclination, not original with him, of adhering to the law of prose which calls for a capital only at the beginning of a sentence. He said nothing, wrote nothing, did nothing in defence of himself or his associates. He had developed a type of humorous stoicism through which he was able to enjoy many of the diatribes and to weigh them at their own valuation.

Considered in the abstract, the magazine had won a hearing without being "damned with faint praise." Critics even accepted Imagism, now under the expert guidance of Amy Lowell, in preference to these "others"—thus lumping the contributors as a group. Even some of the Imagists were outraged; Krimmie received irate letters from this one and that one. Although Miss Lowell contributed poems of her own and promised to enlist the interest of her allies, she couldn't resist the necessity of politely scolding the editor. Cousin Ezra himself, who had resigned Imagism and gone over to Vorticism, Blast, Wyndham Lewis and Gaudier Brzeska, in-

formed his correspondent: "While I concede this to be the liveliest sheet that has ever come out of the states, quite a few exhibits are frankly impossible." Meanwhile, Ezra couldn't resist sending a naughty little group of his own and—always championing somebody—insisted that Krimmie accept and publish immediately "the strange poem inclosed." The expatriate swore in the strongest handwriting that no man on the horizon of English or American letters could compete with this fellow, T. S. Eliot. The poem enclosed was a highly sophisticated narrative entitled, Portrait Of A Lady. Krimmie received other contributions from sources unknown to him. Delighted though he was with these, a small package, postmarked Chicago, and offering "this little group of serious thinkers" in a warm-hearted, slangy letter, delighted him most of all. The poems and letter were signed, Yours, Carl Sandburg. . . .

VII

POETS AND PACKAGES

Had defiance to criticism been necessary, this small band of men and women provided it through the resiliency their companionship created in Krimmie. But the joyous interests they shared and discussed—often like so many school-children—were sufficient to shut out any concern for what the world might have to say about Others. On a Sunday, quite a group would make the trip out to Grantwood, bring their own bundles of lunch, distribute the contents and then loll about on the hillside rolling away from the shack. Bringing these bundles saved Christine a good deal of labor and Krimmie a good deal of expense. It was never a solemn crowd that arrived—in ones and twos and threes. Nor did all of them make the trip from the other side of the Hudson. One man, looking like Don Quixote de la Mancha driving the rusty Rosinante, came in a battered, two-seated Ford. Though the actual place he started from was an ugly little town called Rutherford, there was enough of the Spaniard in his blood and the madman in his eye and profile to have warranted the comparison. Whenever he climbed down from the saddle, with an oath or a blessing, he disclosed the bold or the bashful features of Ezra Pound's old and Krimmie's new friend, Dr. William Carlos Williams. It was for Bill, even more than any of the others, Krimmie would steal outdoors, shade his eyes and watch for a cloud of dust along the horizon.

Mary Carolyn Davies, a lanky Oregonian, undertook the journey from a sort of settlement house on the lower westside, accompanied now and then by an astonishing person with Titian hair, a brilliant complexion and a mellifluous flow of

polysyllables which held every man in awe. Marianne Moore talked as she wrote and wrote as she talked, and the consummate ease of the performance either way reminded one of the rapids of an intelligent stream. Walter Arensberg, who accepted the devious trip as an act of penance, came out leading Marcel Duchamp, the painter of The Nude Descending A Stairway. The whimsical Marcel would inquire of Krimmie: "Why do you live so far? Is there something you do out here can't be done nearer town?" At other times, Walter would bring another old classmate at Harvard, the long-legged, boyish New Englander, Robert Alden Sanborn, who preferred arguing the relative merits of Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb, Mary Pickford and Blanche Sweet, to anything so dull as shop-talk. Wallace Stevens frankly refused to attempt such a pilgrimage. The occasions he came down from Hartford, Connecticut—a city in which he practised law and never referred to poetry—he devoted to pedestrianism around New York and invited Krimmie to join him. So slight was Krimmie alongside Wallace that the latter was fond of guiding him across crowded thoroughfares and protecting him against the traffic. On one of these walks, the giant suddenly stuffed a package into his editorial pocket, with the hasty proviso: "I must ask you not to breathe a word about this. Print it if you like it, send it back if you don't." It was the manuscript—in the most minute handwriting—of the now famous poem, Peter Quince At The Clavier.

Orrick Johns would come down from his shack higher up on the hill leading a straggler who had inquired the way or introducing some of the many friends who had attached themselves to him. Horace Holley, as thin and ascetic as a vegetarian, was one of the first to visit Grantwood, and one of the first gentlemen he brought with him was a sepulchral roundhead with round glasses who looked and talked like a Buddhist monk and wore the exotic name, Skipwith Cannéll.

Skip brought a fair-haired, blue-eyed lady, the dancer, Kathleen Cannéll, and among her impromptu performances, nothing gave greater pleasure than her exquisite mimicry of Ezra Pound. Skip and Kitty had just returned from London and Paris, where they had been in touch with the latest art movements, including the birth of Imagism, and the stay-at-homes revelled in their stories and pantomime and plied them for more. Each person present asked for every possible contact with other poets. The printed page was not enough; one wanted to greet the other fellow, and failing such a meeting, wished to hear about him, read about him, talk about him.

Occasionally, the bundles the callers brought contained manuscripts in addition to food. The manuscripts were always transferred to Krimmie in secret and stealthily removed by him to the garret he had converted into a workroom and study. No one was ashamed of the things he was writing; he was modest with regard to their possible importance in the surrounding past, present and future. Usually, Krimmie thought more of their poems than they did themselves, and, in order to communicate his feeling, hit upon the expedient of inducing the poets to read aloud. Williams alone approved of the scheme, but when someone challenged him to open the experiment, Bill was overwhelmed with embarrassment and to hide it chanted so savagely that the gasping sounds he emitted were unintelligible. It therefore fell to Krimmie to read aloud for Bill and the rest. Though he tried to color and emphasize each interpretation with the nuance and rhythm characteristic of the author, the air was too heavily laden with uneasiness for him to achieve the desired impression. No two of these mortals resembled each other, and their mutually awkward respect made open criticism an insurmountable difficulty.

They enjoyed talking shop most of all, but their discussions spread an evasive levity over the serious current of their actual

thought. Like most every other cultural activity of the new soil, the intercourse of these people was a novel experience. They had to approach it warily and grow up to the art of conversation with a painstaking, self-conscious *tempo* similar to their development as artists. It was not a lack of self-confidence which dictated so shy a contact, but a joyous bewilderment in the discovery that other men and women were working in a field they themselves felt they had chosen in solitude. Without any affected modesty, each seemed positive that the other fellow was a better poet than himself, and this attitude engendered a regard which expressed itself in silence or a quiet, ungainly phrase. Nothing intrigued Krimmie more —himself eaten up with respect and shyness—than the pastime of setting his friends vis-à-vis like so many men on a chessboard. But they never moved from their chairs for a gambit so obvious.

Each of them had been cultivating a garden in the secrecy of his own isolation. Just as the men and women one discovered among the Imagists and the finer pages of Poetry and The Little Review had come up out of nowhere, so with these men and women. This nowhere had at last assumed a recognizable shape and sentience and one was able to say something sharply relating to a person and his place. In analysing Stevens, whom the others unanimously admired, one did not, of course, say Hartford, Connecticut. One had to grope toward some deeper relationship and touch a new definition of beauty, in the name of Wallace. And, outside this so-called group, if one referred Sandburg to his background and used terms like Chicago, the prairie, the masses, one had to be sure to add that Carl was giving these people and places the voice they had given him. A boomerang was at work somewhere. Intrinsically, one was able to draw like parallels with Robert Frost and New England, Edgar Lee Masters and the American dead, Vachel Lindsay and the march of the pioneer, Sherwood

Anderson and the inhibited small town. Among these individuals who came out to Grantwood, definitions were as yet harder to get at, doubtless because in the matter of "newness," "queerness," "originality," they were even more foreign to custom than their more famous brothers.

The circumstance that the work of this one or that one puzzled Krimmie at the start did not prevent him from placing it on an equal footing in the magazine with the work of those he already understood. No manuscripts required more readings than those of Mina Loy and Marianne Moore. However, in the almost unanimous ridicule accorded the contributors, not even these ladies out-distanced Krimmie's special ally, Bill Williams. Shy though Bill was in person, blank paper let loose anything he felt about everything, and he frankly and fearlessly undressed himself down to the ground. Not since the days of old Walt had an American gone quite so far, and readers were shocked all over again.

Krimmie was happy in his new association and the stimuli it afforded and had a faith in the future of these groping individuals, and a growing faith in himself. His belief in them and theirs in him, never categorically expressed, reacted bountifully, and his heart asked for no more. The work of his friends contained originality in variform quality to satisfy him, if he needed such a sign, that the private little undertaking Walter and he had dubbed Others had been enabled to establish a *raison d'être*. As he saw it, a medium had arrived in which the diversified contributors, and not the editor, dictated the editorial policy. He was grateful for all the dark blunders he had committed in the Quarterly, the Advance and The Glebe. Without those introductory adventures, he could never have given himself to the present problem with the requisite impersonality. And he was human enough to find the "success" of Others sweet partly because of the defeats he had had to sustain in the earlier days.

Among the first contributors to Others, no person gave as much of himself as Bill Williams. Regardless of the many patients who required his attention in and around the gray town of Rutherford, the medico often pointed the blunt nose of his Ford toward Grantwood or wrote incisive letters to Krimmie and aided him critically in the onerous task of choosing and rejecting manuscripts. Krimmie had never encountered a more incongruous American than this artist, scientist and madman. His letters, as outspoken as his poems, attacked and applauded Krimmie in the same paragraph, and for the sake of clarity many a goddam was thrown at the editor—and thrown back in rebuttal. At the close of such an exchange of civilities, Bill would laugh, turn on himself—another favorite pastime—and subject the patient to a surgical operation in which no phase of the raw spirit was spared. Groans would issue from the defenceless ego, and then someone had to treat him like the adolescent he was at such times. Shyness, bravado, imagination, scientific accuracy, childishness, were constantly at war in this son of a Porto Rican woman (Raquel Ellen Rose Hoheb) and an Englishman. One had to develop many shades of responsiveness to cope with the medico's changeable moods and melodies. Kimmie learned the dance so effectively that Bill often charged him with hypocrisy and diplomacy. Then words would fly once more and Bill would go back to castigating himself on paper. A fiery verse or two would be posted from Rutherford to Grantwood.

Both men held the mind of Marianne Moore in absolute admiration. What they lacked in intellectual stability was freely and unconsciously supplied by her. And her familiarity with books on every conceivable theme astonished them. "How she can spin words!" Krimmie would say and Bill would add, "We're a pair of tongue-tied tyros by comparison."

"Not long ago," Krimmie confessed, "I tried to catch her napping."

Bill rubbed his hands and grinned with expectancy.

"Never having found her at a loss on any topic whatsoever, I wanted to give myself the pleasure at least once of hearing her stumped about something. Certain that only an experience completely strange to her would be the thing, I invited her to a ball game at the Polo Grounds. This descent into the world of the low-brow started beautifully. It was a Saturday afternoon and the Cubs and Giants were scheduled for one of their ancient frays. The 'L' was jammed with fans and we had to stand all the way uptown and hang on to straps. Marianne was totally oblivious to the discomfiture anyone else would have felt and, in answer to a question of mine, paraded whole battalions of perfectly marshalled ideas in long columns of balanced periods which no lurching on the part of the train or pushing on the part of the crowd disturbed. Wait till we reach the grounds, I promised myself, and Matty winds up, tosses a perfect fadeaway, the batter misses it, and Marianne goes on talking.

"Well, I got her safely to her seat and sat down beside her. Without so much as a glance toward the players at practice grabbing grounders and chasing fungos, she went on giving me her impression of the respective technical achievements of Mr. Pound and Mr. Aldington without missing a turn in the rhythm of her speech, until I, a little impatient, touched her arm and, indicating a man in the pitcher's box winding up with the movement Matty's so famous for, interrupted: 'But Marianne, wait a moment, the game's about to begin. Don't you want to watch the first ball?' 'Yes indeed,' she said, stopped, blushed and leaned forward. The old blond boy delivered a tantalizing fadeaway which hovered in the air and then, just as it reached the batter, Shorty Slagle, shot from his shoulders to his knees and across the plate. 'Strike!' bawled Umpire Emslie. 'Excellent,' said Marianne.

"Delighted, I quickly turned to her with: 'Do you happen to know the gentleman who threw that strike?'

" 'I've never seen him before,' she admitted, 'but I take it it must be Mr. Mathewson.'

"I could only gasp, 'Why?'

" 'I've read his instructive book on the art of pitching——'

" 'Strike two!' interrupted Bob Emslie.

" 'And it's a pleasure,' she continued imperturbably, 'to note how unerringly his execution supports his theories——'

" 'Strike three, batter's out!' concluded the umpire and, as Shorty Slagle slunk away, glared toward the Chicago bench for the next victim. . . ."

VIII

BANK STREET

THE new magazine had hardly run beyond three or four numbers when Krimmie had premonitions, vague at first, but compelling in time, that life in the two-room shack was not quite the thing for Christine. It was not that she didn't enjoy the society of his friends—a weird crowd against the pleasant, humdrum folk she had grown up with in Connecticut. While she didn't comprehend what they were raving about as a rule and much of their shop-talk must have proved tedious, she was fond of the various individuals and they returned her affection. She treated them like a group of youngsters, and they treated her like one of them. Williams, Sanborn, Arensberg, particularly, paid her boyish attentions which must have compensated her more than once for the rarefied hair-splitting she had to listen to. When she served tea on Sunday afternoons—the sole duty they would accept at her hands—she performed the rite with so much mischievous fooling that she corrupted all talk for a while, and the "boys" were grateful for the respite. Many an addled head revived under the influence of the Chinese or Japanese beverage and the fantastic comedy of the girl who handed the cups about, and many an eye glanced up at her with a mood not unlike adoration. No, it was not the new society. As Krimmie, back among his self-centred habits, gradually reduced his premonitions to a common denominator, accusing forefingers crooked themselves in his own direction.

Notwithstanding her joyous nature and his love and dependence, Krimmie had begun to prove, even to himself, anything but a model husband. He felt that, as usual, economics lay at the bottom of things, but there was no excuse for being an

eternal imbecile in that regard. There must be some way of improving his income in a world where everybody else seemed to get along somehow. There were times when he thought his companion was in danger of becoming a drudge. This would never do; it could not, must not go on. In a house without a trace of modern conveniences, she had to cook meals and wash dishes under less than primitive conditions. At the start, she made light of their privations and forced Krimmie to overlook them, but her persistent activities had had an effect on her buoyancy. He didn't notice this until he found her looking thinner and heard her sigh a little wearily when they retired for the night. He attributed it to the housework and begged her to let him help her, but she threw off his solicitude. The housework was nothing, she said. Silently and tenderly, he looked elsewhere and before long thought he had located the trouble. She was homesick for her family, and, most poignantly of all, the Daddy she had left behind. Her father was equally homesick for her, and after an exchange of letters, they saw each other again—but never in Grantwood. Krimmie was invited to join one of their meetings in town—a severe ordeal—and out of this reunion, other meetings followed.

Whenever he returned from these gatherings, with a heart as heavy as an old man's, he would have another session with himself, and the upshot of a series of such meditations brought him to the decisive conclusion that they must turn their backs on Grantwood and rent a place somewhere in New York. Out in the wilds of Jersey, so far removed from the markets, one was cut off from the hope of sustaining one's independence as a free lance and the chance of calling on more editors and soliciting additional orders for stories. Much to Christine's delight, he told her one day that in view of the oncoming winter and the like, they ought to search for a studio in town. They found such a place without much effort, since they only needed a room and a kitchenette for the belongings they had amassed. It was a nice room, much larger than Krimmie's

old room on Fourteenth Street, and an advance in every other way over that rookery. What amused him, and amused her as well, was the address they had now. The name of the street was Bank Street.

It was an extremely peaceful neighborhood, and her father approved of the change with the most boyish pleasure and shipped down from the house in Silvermine the furniture and rugs he had promised to send them in the past. Another fine feature of the move was the assurance that Krimmie would now be able to circulate Others much closer to the centre of gravity. True, there were people who still wrote to Grantwood and had to have their mail forwarded until the new address appeared on the next issue. No extra confusion arose until still another address had to be placed on the cover.

Krimmie's friends welcomed the change to New York. No more interminable trips out to the sticks and no more waiting until Sunday for a meeting. Bank Street was also out-of-the-way, but one could succeed in finding the "one-room-home" in due season, and it was commodious enough to hold a number of callers at once. Christine had decorated the walls and arranged their belongings tastefully. The effect was charming, inviting. Krimmie was a wee bit jealous of a dreamy small portrait of her in half lights and shadows. Charles had painted it several years ago and it now hung over the mantelpiece. Krimmie didn't mind the portrait itself—weren't his own variations finer?—but he couldn't stop minding that it had been composed before them. Still, he had two copper plaques Tommy had given him to lay against the painting, and a mock tilt of memories was waged between them.

One afternoon, he returned from one of his peregrinations in search of a story, and discovered a sandy-haired gentleman sitting at her side and being fed what looked like a chocolate cookie. He was so astonished that the stranger joined Christine in the laugh at his expense. Krimmie presumed that the scene had been prepared for him, entered into the

mood of it and demanded: "Who is this accurséd intruder?"

The gentleman arose and murmured with an exaggerated drawl: "I've come down from Boston in answer to some correspondence we've had from time to time."

"Correspondence?" Krimmie appealed to Christine.

"You'll have to guess who it is," she chimed in.

It was a game they loved and played to the limit, this guessing at the name of a newcomer. Krimmie ventured politely: "I've had quite a little correspondence with Bostonians—Amy Lowell, for one——"

"Try again," the stranger interposed.

"Have I ever published anything of yours?"

"No, but you've had the priceless opportunity."

This confession embarrassed Krimmie. Nothing ever disturbed him more than meeting a rejected contributor. "You don't mean to say I've committed the oversight of sending back something of yours?"

"Not something but several things—and on more than one occasion——"

"Then you must be that confounded conservative, Conrad Aiken!"

"Guilty!" the accused admitted, and Krimmie and Conrad shook hands hilariously. Conrad sat down next to Christine as before. Krimmie nodded and added: "You might as well finish that cookie."

Quickly glancing at the portrait, he sat down opposite Aiken. Christine poured a cup of tea for Krimmie. A sudden recollection had dampened his hilarity. He knew that Conrad was an old friend of Charles and had often seen Christine and Charles together. She had told him this and jokingly charged him with rejecting Conrad's poems because of his relation to the past. "No," he had replied, "I simply can't see his poems any more than he can see mine." Aiken was renowned at the time as one of the foremost opponents of the Imagists and Others.

Krimmie looked at him again. In view of their differences,

what an excellent fellow he must be to come in such a genial spirit. Conrad smiled urbanely. "I know what you're thinking," he said. "I'm constantly afflicted with a similar thought —that the men whose stuff I can't abide inevitably become my best friends, while those whose work I admire are absolute bores in the flesh."

A fellowship developed between them which was never threatened, not even by the admiration they eventually arrived at with respect to each other's work.

The next day the new friends took a long walk and gossiped about artists they knew—always with the exception of Charles. For this bit of tactfulness, Krimmie was silently grateful. He urged Conrad to stay in town another day, but the Bostonian could never endure New York for more than twenty-four hours at a stretch.

Not long after Conrad's departure, while Krimmie's thought still drifted among hypotheses and memories, a sudden event flashed the secret of Christine's misery. With the most candid straightforwardness and a touch of terror in her eyes, she held out a letter to him. He quickly put his arm about her, made her sit down, and read the letter. It was from Rome, the first she had had since their marriage, and things he read between the lines betrayed how wretched Charles was over there. Things he heard in her voice showed him how deeply she was moved. In response to a question he felt rather than heard, he agreed she must answer the letter. In that short, delicately evasive exchange of emotions, Krimmie felt, just as clearly as he sat there and tried to quiet her fears, that the old days with Charles would return and must be allowed to take their course if three people were not to be precipitated onto a tragedy. In that one instant, he recognized that the old tie was stronger than the new and had its roots in soil infinitely deeper and more tenacious than his own relation with Christine. There was no affection like the affection they shared. But it was only affection.

Krimmie talked this over and over with himself on long, lonely walks that took him nowhere and brought him back nowhere. A period of feverish activities ensued. He drove himself into many channels of forgetfulness—wrote poems, Sunday stories, songs on the mandolute, and planned the composition of a series of short plays on love. Luckily, also, Others continued to occupy him, and he saw Bill and Bob and Walter and Marianne, not to mention several newcomers, the most amazing of whom, after an exchange of poems and confidences, wrote that he was coming from Chicago to meet "the one man who seemed to have genuine elements of friendship." Krimmie rented a room in advance for this gentleman in the same house on Bank Street, and on a frightfully stormy day, the queerest among the queer arrived, with one arm in a sling and an old portmanteau on the other.

"Hello, Bodenheim," Krimmie greeted him effusively, but the yellow-haired child of melancholia corrected him, "Friends call me—Bogie—for short," and gravely setting down his grip held out a pale hand. Christine helped Krimmie with various little acts of hospitality, and presently there sat in front of them someone who made Krimmie feel he had encountered a human being actually unhappier than himself. And a fellow so eccentric and so expert in exhibiting the many sides of his misanthropy, that Krimmie was tempted to hail him as a godsend in the disguise of Mephisto.

Although he was about twenty-two at the time, Maxwell Bodenheim spoke with the weariness of an aged man, and his pale eyes gave forth the insistent impression that for him life had sounded the ultimate disillusionment. His voice, of a bitter sarcastic tinge, chanted a tireless flow of picturesque metaphors and similes the like of which Krimmie had never heard anywhere. No matter how involved the image, Bogie would reach the end of a period with consummate ease. When he was introduced to the others in a party of welcome on Bank Street, there was no greater pleasure than listening to Bogie

and Marianne Moore spinning long, subtle thoughts in colloquy. The extreme heights were attained on both sides in an atmosphere of sheer detachment emphasized by the dignified references, "Mr. Bodenheim," "Miss Moore." Bogie's poems, mature to the last degree, were frankly admired in the crowd, and the poverty-stricken misanthrope, who hated nothing on earth as he hated Chicago and the Poetry crowd,—the first of an endless series of antipathies—sunned himself in this admiration. He took it as a matter of course, but more than once betrayed the impression that he was about as happy as he could allow himself to be without neglecting to keep an eye on the disillusionment certain to follow.

To Christine, Bogie was simply one more patient who required her care. He had explained how he hurt his arm by falling off a street car just before entraining for New York—"another of life's little jokes." And so, whenever he descended from his room overhead in the morning, with the bored air of a visiting potentate, she had to tie his tie, readjust his coat, brush it a bit, urge him to sit down to breakfast and wait on him generally. Krimmie marvelled at the blandness with which he accepted these attentions as a natural right. Then they would sit down and talk—or rather, Bogie would talk, since he rarely listened to anything anyone else had to say. If one had a hard-luck tale to tell, it reminded him of something that had befallen him. And his misadventure, always beautifully embellished, but precise and accurate in the skeleton of the plot, made one feel one's own mishap was gloriously fortunate by comparison. No one enjoyed his stories more than Bogie himself. At the conclusion of a narrative he was the first to greet it—with a sardonic chuckle. No one questioned his right to amuse himself that way. He enjoyed little else at the time.

Bogie was indeed a godsend to Krimmie. The latter grasped every available phase of forgetfulness he could attach himself to. Another letter from Rome hinted there was nothing left

for Charles in catholicism. Or in art or in life. He wanted to return to America. Krimmie pulled himself together, and feeling rather heroic, as well as grim with forebodings, whispered something about "you'd better let him come." For once, he had to hold Christine in his arms. For once, she seemed to need him more than he had ever needed her. She was a greater child than he had ever appeared to himself, and in some unfathomable fashion, he loved the sensation. He mumbled the nothings one addresses to a child. But the sounds must have applied to him as well. He caught himself listening to them as if some mellow old man, out of the depths of the past, were addressing him through the need of soothing the girl in his arms. When she smiled up at some nonsensical extravagance, he was proud of the old fellow and patted him on the back. Not that he could find the old fellow. But he liked to fancy such a creature existed. And was attempting and accomplishing something Krimmie himself would have failed in.

Sometimes, alone with himself—usually while she was asleep—he enjoyed holding long dialogues with the old man. And of course they talked about love. The contradictory meanings of the one divine emotion. How much of it was really the self, how little of it the beloved. How the thing to do was to try to bring the impulse more and more out of the self and closer to the beloved. Otherwise, it would not only not grow, but prove false to nature, turn on itself—and nothing could come of it. No third person—for one thing—could come of it. If this new being was to come, and it was another man's fate to bring it forth—one must act accordingly. Or a whole small world would be affected and go to ruin. To feel love was not enough. One must believe in it, live in it, follow its high command in each given circumstance.

Some such talk Krimmie had with the old man in the dark. Until the two fell asleep—near the child they liked to fancy lay there beside them. . . .

IX

MÜNCHAUSEN

About this time, Krimmie ran headlong into a job, a veritable sinecure brought to his attention by the tiniest woman in town, Bessie Breuer, Sunday editor of The New York Tribune. This innocent minion of Nemesis had read stories of his in the Telegraph and challenged him bluntly: "Why don't you let us have an occasional article?" Vitally interested in Others besides, she asked him to come to her office and tell her how she might be of use to the magazine. Obviously, one could help Others most effectively by raising the editor's income, and so she told him about a man on Wall Street who was sorely in want of someone to write his letters. He had just lost his social secretary, a poet named Orrick Johns ("God bless Orrick!" Krimmie interposed), and ever since, his correspondence had deteriorated. This man—whom we shall call Mr. Krauss—happened to be the leader of the Hungarians in this country, and, standing high in the Democratic party, and being a gentleman of the first social connections everywhere, always required someone (since his own English was broken) to compose the superfine notes commensurable with his calling. "You'll only have to write a few letters a day," Bessie concluded, "in the poetic tradition. The rest of the time you'll have to yourself, your poems and Others."

Krimmie called on Mr. Krauss, received a hearty handshake and an immediate offer of forty dollars a week. He was too bewildered to accept, so Mr. Krauss accepted it for him, and conducted and assigned him to a handsome desk in a sunny office two doors away, where he was introduced to the business secretary who would share the room with him. After

some final instructions, Mr. Krauss said genially: "This young lady will always be glad to help you with any further information you may need." The diplomat treated him like a Secretary of State and addressed him with such an apologetic tone that Krimmie could only bow and take his seat at the desk. He sat there dizzily wondering, accustomed as he was to niggers in the woodpile, how soon the fellow would bob up and destroy things. But the nigger kept his head in obscurity, and Krimmie lost himself in a reverie in which silver coins danced with gold ones in a capricious rondo all around Wall Street to the tune of forty dollars a week.

Thanks to this beneficence, Krimmie and Christine were able to move from the one-room-home on Bank Street to as many as seven rooms on Jane. The new street was rather old and dilapidated; therefore the rent for so many rooms, several more than they required, was comparatively low. Superficially, people had a right to suppose the couple had improved their worldly condition.

Below the surface they displayed to their friends, a cloak they put on so that those affectionate folk might not see the truth, Christine and Krimmie were wretched. Even though Charles had returned from abroad and they seemed nearer a solution of their problem, each new step was attempted under a heavy darkness. Despite further heroic resolutions ahead and successful steps behind them, communication through the ordinary channels of speech had grown inordinately difficult. There were occasions when Krimmie could not hide the strain under which he labored in behalf of his share of their understanding, and Christine wished to stay with him and send Charles away. Between two men who needed her more than any other human entity, her joyousness was being torn apart. It was a situation, presumably, for a woman much older in suffering and wisdom, but, as far as he was concerned, Krimmie was glad Christine was the one who had to

face it. He must take his own weakness in hand and conduct it with every outward sign of serenity. By every law in nature, Charles and Christine had always belonged to each other. Krimmie had been the unconscious medium for bringing them together again, and it was now his province to remove himself and to see that Christine let him do so. This she refused to accept. As if giving and receiving had any concern in the matter. She had determined to wait until she could be sure there was someone else—to take care of Krimmie. He endeavored to laugh at such a whim, but she looked at him clearly and said: "Someone will come and be more to you than a dozen Christines." Krimmie tried to make believe that this could be true. . . .

With office hours from eleven to three, minus an hour for lunch, and nothing to do but compose a few notes a day to political and fashionable figures, Krimmie led an enviable existence in Wall Street. So neatly did he satisfy Mr. Krauss, sometimes with the aid of the little dark secretary, that the Hungarian promoted him to an office of his own, shut off from the rest of the suite by an oaken door on the panel of which his name was inscribed in gold letters. Krimmie swung about in his swivel chair and managed to enjoy the irony of his rise to such a place at such a time. In his sound-proof seclusion, high up in a skyscraper overlooking other skyscrapers, he had all the leisure in the world for writing what he felt like writing and editing Others. For his own convenience and the greater ease of contributors, subscribers and booksellers, he had rented a box in the main post office of the city, and the new address appeared on the cover of the next issue, P. O. B. Thirteen. Mr. Krauss rarely disturbed the privacy of his daily occupation. If the boss came in and found him at a poem or collating Others, he would apologize for the intrusion and ask him to step into his office whenever he

could spare a moment. Mr. Krauss was proud of the fact that he was the only man downtown who had a poet as his social secretary and had had a poet before the present incumbent. The diplomat was fond of a list of adjectives to which he referred in order to apprise Krimmie as to the type of letter Mr. Soandso ought to receive. "Write one of your facetious notes"—or reserved, dignified, fantastic, as the case called for. More than once, Mr. Krauss would ask him to glance over Mr. Tumulty's response to "our letter of a few days ago." Krimmie would eye the chaste, White House stationery, read what the President had instructed his secretary to write, and chuckle to himself: "Even Woodrow Wilson is reading your writings now."

During the last Presidential election, in 1912, Mr. Krauss had swung the Hungarian vote over to the Democratic party, and it was only natural that he should hold a fairly confidential rank in Washington circles. So, at least, he prided himself. Accordingly, he was in more or less constant correspondence with the leaders of the party and had earned the honor of conferring with them at the foremost Democratic club of New York. As a result of the trust reposed in him in exchange for values received, Mr. Krauss ascended rarefied heights in the next Presidential campaign, now in full swing, and arrayed himself in gorgeous irradiations as he laid various documents before his secretary and asked him to use the gamut of a literary style in embellishing the salient points to be incorporated in each response. The paramount issue of the Democratic campaign expressed itself in a glorious determination to keep America out of the European imbroglio, and Mr. Krauss easily answered for the continued loyalty and vote of the thousands of hyphenates under his guidance. More and more rapidly and to greater and greater heights rose the head of the Hungarian-Americans, and one fine day, Krimmie was called into his office and found him pacing back and forth in a state of nerv-

ous intensity. Presently, the old man controlled himself, sat down, waved his secretary to a chair and told him what had happened at a conference to which he had been called, and what the leaders had asked him to do.

"I have been asked to be one of four men to submit the opening, keynote speech to be delivered by Mr. McCombs, Chairman of the Democratic Party, at the forthcoming Presidential convention in St. Louis." Turning to Krimmie, he added, "If my life depended on it, I couldn't write such a speech—you must do it for me."

"I?" broke out Krimmie, flabbergasted.

"Wait, don't get excited. This is only an honor they're conferring on me. The four speeches will be submitted, mine will be filed and they will graciously thank me for it. I shall have done my duty to the party. Then one of the other speeches will be accepted and delivered by my friend, McCombs. Surely one of those old campaigners—Colonel Harvey, Colonel Watterson or ex-Governor Glynn of this state—no matter which—will write just the speech required. All I have to do is to keep my promise. They want the Hungarian vote, of course. And I'll be glad to give it to them."

"But, Mr. Krauss," Krimmie protested earnestly. "I don't know one party from the other. If I had to go to the chair for it, I couldn't tell them apart. I've never even voted——"

"Never mind, my boy," the old man interposed. "I'll give you a few main pointers and what you don't get from me you'll get from the newspapers. Don't take the matter too seriously. There's no hurry about it."

"I see," Krimmie responded, not a little relieved. And dropped all immediate thought of the matter. But not so his employer. One morning he rushed into Krimmie's room and announced: "You must come with me to Chicago! I have to attend the Republican convention and listen to those fools nominating some jackass for their ticket. You must come

along and get some ideas for that speech. There's nothing like tackling the elephant in his own lair."

Krimmie assured his employer he could arrange his affairs at home for the trip, and the latter was delighted. Krimmie was equally delighted. He wanted to see the great city by the lake, the home of the renaissance in American letters, possibly meet some of those fine fellows, Sandburg, Masters, Anderson, Lindsay, and visit Harriet Monroe in her own bailiwick. He had the profoundest misgivings concerning the speech. He had been reading the Republican newspapers and trying to contrast them with the Democratic. In his search for clues of opposition, he could detect no fundamental differences in the respective party ideals. The more he read the more he felt the two were identical. Mr. Krauss had to advise him again not to worry so much, that what he wrote wouldn't matter. And Krimmie again forgot about the speech.

A few days later, rapidly bound for Chicago, he had his first glimpse of places west of the Hudson. Early the next day, thrilled in every fibre, he rolled into the den of "the hog-butcher," and registered at a hotel on the North Side, not far from Mr. Krauss' hotel. He soon discovered that Cass Street lay around the corner and reported at the Poetry office. Harriet Monroe had arranged a courteous little luncheon of welcome, and at a small table already referred to, Krimmie met Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg and William Marion Reedy. Exciting though that meeting was, Krimmie, to his great regret, had to hurry off for an appointment with Mr. Krauss. The next few days, he was busy for the most part nodding or almost sleeping at the everlasting sessions of the Republican convention. He had heard the opening speech, delivered by Senator Harding, and throughout that mechanical process and the superseding rigmarole, had suffered the most abject boredom. In the fog which pressed against him, he could only marvel how he, of all people, was to write a single

line in answer to such twaddle. To compete with it, nothing but similar twaddle would do.

As often as he could, he stole back to the Poetry office. It was the only refuge of temporary escape. Among the people he encountered for a moment or two, a stocky Roumanian with dancing eyes suddenly confronted him—asked him whether he'd like to make a speech about Others in the Chicago Little Theatre. "I'm a machinist, a friend of Maxwell Bodenheim's," the man added proudly, "and I've been reading Others from the start."

Speech—Others—machinist—Krimmie groped about, and recalling how Bogie had regaled him with stories about a man in Chicago who painted portraits, wrote poetry and had founded the Vagabonds, but stubbornly insisted he was only a machinist, asked: "Are you Billy Saphier?"

"That's me," he replied, and they shook hands heartily. Before he was aware of the trend of things, Krimmie thanked him for his faith in Others, acknowledged the implied compliment to himself as a speaker and accepted the proposal of a recital at Maurice Browne's little theatre. Suddenly, new misgivings overtook him and he wished to change his mind. But the shy machinist had vanished and the spellbinder returned to his own mental confusion. That same day he received an invitation to spend the rest of his stay in Chicago at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Aldis in Lake Forest, the city's most beautiful suburb. Mary Aldis, the playwright, had contributed to Others, and at the Poetry office had heard about Krimmie's dilemma in connection with the political speech. She advised him it would be best for him to retire to the country and meditate in peace. Chicago was so overwhelming, Krimmie accepted her invitation and that same evening, feeling like an ambassador from the Orient, was installed in a private suite of rooms with a silent Chinese servant to wait on him. Here, he sat down on the morning his employer's

speech was due, and wrestled with it. He must deliver something or other to Mr. Krauss at luncheon in Chicago.

He had finally reduced all avenues of approach to one. He knew from experience he could only attempt a theme of which he was ignorant, or had no feeling for but the sharpest antipathy, through the most carefully veiled satire. It was in this mood he wrote what Mr. Krauss had asked him for. Praying that the old man would not detect the parody between the lines, he presented the paper to his employer. The gods were kind. Except for a few phrases Mr. Krauss deleted or revised, he was delighted with the script, and forgetting about the luncheon rushed off to a conclave of the Democratic powers in town. About an hour later, while Krimmie was lunching alone and tremulously waiting for news from the front, Mr. Krauss came rushing back and greeted him uproariously. Colonel Harvey's speech, Colonel Watterson's, ex-Governor Glynn's—none of these had been accepted. "*Ours* has been accepted," the old man shouted and Krimmie was almost paralysed. Thrusting a fifty-dollar bill into his lifeless hand, his employer told him to take the short vacation he deserved and report back in New York in a week or so. "I must go to St. Louis for our own convention," he concluded and hurried away.

On the same day Mr. McCombs was scheduled to deliver the opening speech in St. Louis, Krimmie was scheduled to deliver his address on Others at the Chicago Little Theatre. At the last moment, the impresario, Saphier, was stricken with an attack of ptomaine poisoning and could not supervise the final details of publicity, etc. Miserable down to his toes, Billy lay helpless in bed, and Krimmie had to go to the theatre alone and act as his own chairman. When he stepped out onto the platform, with his muddled thoughts straying to Missouri, he found only sixteen people in the auditorium. They included Sandburg, Harriet Monroe and three grinning reporters.

Krimmie begged these samaritans to come up closer to the stage so as to give him a feeling of compactness in the assemblage. Led by Sandburg, who ha-haed with pleasure, the sixteen huddled together and looked up at Krimmie's pale face. Then he staggered through his speech and the selections from the poets illustrating it.

The next morning the three reporters had a grand time at Krimmie's expense. After reading what his parodists had to say, he turned to the reports of Mr. McCombs' speech and examined the "verbatim" reproduction. It was decidedly verbatim. He also perused the editorial comments, long, solemn eulogies or long, derisive attacks in accordance with the political standards of the owners. He managed to gather his remaining strength, thank his hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Aldis, Billy Saphier and Harriet Monroe, and to board a train for New York. Feeling somewhat akin to Baron Münchausen, he held himself in readiness for what might occur at the Grand Central Station. If reporters should run forward to ply him for an interview, he would wave a dignified hand and repel them with— "I have nothing further to say for publication." But the reporters weren't there. . . .

X

A STRANGE ANNIVERSARY

SHORTLY before the first anniversary of their wedding, Christine and Krimmie reached an abrupt decision. They would celebrate it by having a quiet farewell dinner and part the following morning. They were undoubtedly prompted by the dramatic novelty of such a step on such a day—Krimmie decidedly so—but behind this whim for high comedy much stronger elements had driven them. Living together, they were swayed by too many personal motives to see things in the abstract and act on them objectively. Christine's position especially had grown untenable. And so, not long after Krimmie had recovered from a siege of mercurial poisoning which might have carried him off "but for the constitution you've inherited" (his doctor had told him), the young couple planned to make a day of it and then ignore the conventions of society. Christine would return to her family and Krimmie—well, he would look after the rest somehow.

It was a strenuously complicated period in other directions too. He had become involved in several new ideas and ventures. First of all, Robert J. Coady, who had just founded The Soil, had invited him to take charge of the literary section while he himself looked after the art and reproductions. The scheme was to be a combination of Others and The Soil, and most of the "boys" were in favor of it. Krimmie examined the idea with the greatest care and, supported by Bill Williams, the most valiant champion of Others, gratefully rejected it. Both men felt and argued with the rest that the writings of "the group" and the issues still confronting them were too untried, as yet, for an alliance of any sort. Coady went on

with The Soil single-handed—much to the chagrin of Bob Sanborn and Skip Cannéll. On the eve of still another venture, a four-page daily newspaper to be entirely devoted to the arts, the independent Irishman died—unknown to most of his contemporaries and unacknowledged by most of his debtors.

Impatient with Krimmie for his refusal to ally Others with The Soil, Skip Cannéll tried to induce him to lift the magazine beyond its present boundaries. He had heard Krimmie gossip about the need of a playhouse in which the younger artists of the country might band together for the free development of their own temperaments, and finally cornered him into confessing he had once thought of a place for "housing the moderns." "What stopped you?" Skip demanded, and Krimmie replied, "Lack of funds." Skip was employed by John Wanamaker and flattered himself on the possession of what is known as business acumen. He was such a persuasive *raconteur* and so adept in debate that he soon battered down Krimmie's objections. Harassed on every side, the latter's powers of resistance had been reduced to a feeble state, and before he was fully conscious of the tendency to which he had committed himself, found Skip leading him up the broad steps of a red-stone residence on Irving Place, in the vicinity of Gramercy Park. The paucity of their funds did not prevent Skip from pricing the rental of the residence. It was rather high, but the author of Ikons would see to that. Had he not drawn up, with the aid of a clever lawyer, certain articles of incorporation he and Krimmie had signed, in response to which endless shares of stock were to be sold to enthusiastic admirers? Up to the time of Krimmie's sudden illness, no such admirers had appeared, and the invalid, stricken with domestic as well as physical problems, had to beg Skip to desist. The man who looked like a Buddhist monk continued to argue with the man in bed until the latter rolled over and groaned sepulchrally. Thanks to Kitty and Christine, the combatants were

separated, and a dream to be known as The Other Playhouse had to be discarded.

Soon after his recovery, Krimmie met a young man who had broken away from Mitchell Kennerley and opened an independent one-room publishing house on West Forty-second Street. This young man, Alfred A. Knopf, was so keenly attracted by the Others movement, he asked the editor to collate an annual anthology of poems to be issued under the sign of the Borzoi, and Krimmie found the publisher so sensitive to modern movements that he accepted. The first compilation appeared in 1916, along with a modest manifesto prepared by the editor for the publisher to circulate. Krimmie met still another young man—John Marshall, the partner of Lawrence Gomme in The Little Bookshop Around the Corner—and this man wanted to take over Others, the magazine, foot the bills and have some real printers, The Vail-Ballou Company of Binghamton, do the printing. The volatile Canadian also planned a publishing venture and the first book he wished to issue was a collection of Krimmie's mushrooms. This was to be followed, if all went well, by single volumes devoted to Bodenheim, Cannéll, Stevens, Williams and Marianne Moore. Krimmie accepted the proposal with alacrity, and Marshall took over the material interests of Others and brought out the mushrooms, with an appropriate cover designed by William Zorach. Meanwhile, Bodenheim, who had been away on a trip to Boston, returned to the scene and had to be taken in somewhere. Christine and Krimmie could easily spare one of their extra rooms, so they turned it over to him.

The day of the anniversary was near and their guest was still with them. Bogie was so hard up and miserable, and they enjoyed his company so heartily, affording as it did an unpremeditated distraction to what they were suffering, there was only one thing to do: they must let him stay on till the end. Neither said a word to him about their farewell plan. Not

until they sat down to Christine's last dinner. Then Krimmie turned to him, and trying to joke about it, said with mock-severity: "Bogie—I'm sorry to have to tell you—you'll have to move elsewhere tomorrow."

His astonishment was greater, for once, than his powers of repartee. Krimmie had to explain, while Christine tried to smile at the drollery of his speech, that this was "a sort of apotheosis" to their first and their last day together. Bogie nodded understandingly, bowed his head and was silent. His hosts made several ineffectual attempts to rally him, only to fall into silence themselves. When Christine cleared away the dishes, Bogie drew forth his old corn-cob and Krimmie his old briar, and they sat in the gathering darkness and smoked without interruption. . . .

A day or two later, Krimmie, now alone, received another visitor. Had he had any power in choosing a companion for this last day on Jane Street, he would have picked the very man who sat nearby and pulled at a philosophical pipe. Thanks to Aiken's presence, Krimmie assumed a jocular mask his friend copied gracefully. As he had a delicate mania for analysing and caricaturing his own misadventures with life, Conrad could easily join in the mood Krimmie had determined upon as the one to carry him through the performance of packing material things in rooms echoing with spiritual ones. And as the Bostonian was expert in the field of psychological detachment, he was able to help Krimmie talk about many an irrelevant theme.

For the most part they gossiped about Others and the men and women who composed it. Aiken had come around to some of these queer folk and in his growing fondness for the "little yellow dog" had mailed Krimmie a check toward the payment of Mr. Liberty's bill for one whole issue. This in spite of the fact that his work had not yet appeared in the magazine.

However, by employing one of his hoaxes, the sandy-haired poet finally slipped by the editorial portals. One time, while Bill Williams relieved Krimmie of his oppressive job for a month or two and edited Others out in Rutherford, a package of imagistic poems, concise and picturesque, came in from an address in Connecticut with a strange name at the head of each sheet. It happened that Krimmie was visiting Bill over the week-end, and he joined the medico in praising the script. But there was something so familiar about the typewriting that he asked Bill to let him compare the sheets with certain letters in his possession marked Boston. When the poems were printed, the author's real name was attached to them—much to Conrad's enjoyment of the turn of the hoax. While Krimmie went from object to object and laid it away, Conrad resurrected and embellished the tale. And Krimmie began to forget what he was doing. . . .

That same day, warmly urged by the Caffins to return to them, he moved over to their apartment on West Eighth Street. They alone on the one hand and Conrad on the other had a thorough knowledge of the situation. His other friends were puzzled by it and gave the impression that they were the genuine sufferers. Christine was gone and a certain rendezvous had vanished. There had been no inkling as to the cause of the separation. More than once, they looked as though they felt Christine and Krimmie had acted rashly or even flippantly. That their sudden step had been prompted, if not by superficial motives, then by something hidden away in a mysterious closet, not to be disclosed by one or the other. Even when the real story was divulged, most of the members of "the group" were still mystified.

Shortly after moving to the Caffins', Krimmie consulted a lawyer, an old chess pal, as to the *modus operandi* of obtaining Christine's freedom. His friend cast him into abysmal de-

spondency by carefully outlining the seemingly hopeless vise in which the law held them to the past. It looked as if he and Christine would never be able to release each other from the convention they had rushed into with their hearts wide open and their heads in a whirl. And as if Christine and Charles would have to suffer for it.

And Krimmie and someone else, as well. . . .

XI

DOROTHY

Although he avoided people for some time to come, there was one person he visited frequently. Anybody shadowing his movements might have seen him descend the subway—much though he hated the subway—and board a roaring express—much though he hated noises. For nearly an hour he sat in a crowded car and rode out to an obscure station in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Then he would climb three long, steep blocks—often against a gale blowing a blizzard at him—and stop at a door and press a button summoning someone above. A click in the lock would cause him to push open the door, hurry up a flight of stairs and greet a small dark figure. The small dark figure would lead him into a warm room, dimly lighted by a single lamp, and relieve him of his hat and overcoat. Then she would nestle down beside him on a couch and there they would hold each other—without the one or the other saying a word for a while.

Sometimes she would play for him on an instrument which sounded like a clavichord, so delicately did her fingers caress the keyboard. The music he listened to with his body and soul was always one of the preludes or one of the fugues of the god of his life, Johann Sebastian Bach. Sometimes he would read to her—usually from a script he held in his hand while she leaned against his shoulder. If the poem was not one of his, it had been written by one of the others. Sometimes she left the room for a moment and he sat there, impatient for her to return. She would return with a silver tray holding two glasses of wine or two cups of tea. The glasses or cups were usually surrounded by cookies her mother had baked. Often as late

as midnight, more often at one or two in the morning, Krimmie would depart, retrace his way to the subway and back to New York. Much as he hated small hours, he loved these small hours. The figure accompanied him all the way back in memory—and in anticipation. Helped him stretch out on his cot in the Caffin apartment without wishing the thing a grave. As he would have wished it otherwise. . . .

One afternoon, just before Mr. Krauss had appointed him to an office of his own, Krimmie noticed what looked like a music roll on the desk next to his. The desk was not immediately adjacent, but close enough for him to communicate with the little dark secretary whenever he had to—or whenever he didn't have to. The occasions for the latter were rather numerous in the course of a week. Whenever the hours hung heavy on Krimmie's hands and there were no poems to write or issues to collate, he would appeal to her for a morsel of conversation. At first, these questions and answers were confined to the weather, the time of day or some instruction or other from Mr. Krauss that Krimmie didn't grasp, and the young lady readily elucidated. At other times, she would suggest some improvement in the wording of a phrase in a letter of his as being more in keeping with their employer's temperament. Krimmie was therefore under frequent debts of gratitude to his neighbor. In his delight with so much intelligence in a business office, he tried to twit her about her susceptibility to the written word—they had arrived at intermittent exchanges of banter—and to accuse her of having learned what she knew about "literary style" from her association with his forerunner.

Orrick Johns was a fairly constant source of conversation. Naturally, the young lady observed that Krimmie, like Orrick, utilized the hours of unemployment for the private needs of giving vent to a poem. She found the unusual coincidence exciting and droll. To Krimmie's surprise, he caught her betraying a modest familiarity with poets like Byron, Shelley

and Keats, and to his amazement, heard her refer to more than one contemporary. Meditating about the latter, he was certain that Orrick must have instructed her, quite certain until he saw her carrying books into and out of the office and detected Spoon River on one cover and Chicago Poems on another. The deuce, he said to himself. She seemed awfully young to be amusing herself that way. He had always fancied that secretaries, especially good-looking ones, spent their spare hours and evenings with beaus, and went to musical comedies or the movies, skating rinks or dance halls. And this one was more than good-looking.

She had marvellous black hair, rolled to the top of her delicate oval head in some complicated arrangement of waves ending in the air—like the ladies in Goya. She had luminous black eyes with dark lashes, again reminding him of the Spaniard, and the most astonishing complexion he had ever beheld in a human being. And her figure, an exuberant affair of lines and curves, which she clothed tastefully, and which moved with the sudden energies of a bird—what was this doing at a desk? The least one could say of it was it belonged at the service of a sculptor—and a damned fine sculptor at that. Still, there must be the usual nigger somewhere and, in his growing interest, a feeling he tried to see the absurdity of, he waited for the inevitable. The sight of the music roll gave him the cue. He took hold of it with a preliminary apology—"May I?" She nodded quickly, blushed and turned to her typewriter. He liked this bashful note of hers and wondered what it hid—if anything.

"Do you play?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"The piano."

"Oh."

He unrolled the case politely. He wondered which he would

greet, Hearts And Flowers, Lange's Flower Song or the latest ragtime.

"I'm only studying," she confessed, without watching his operation.

Not unbecoming that, he thought. At least one may be sure she doesn't pound whatever she plays. He began to wish for something higher up—the semi-classical Träumerei, Spring Song, Liebestraum. He gradually drew forth a thick score, stopped at the stamp of the publishers, Breitkopf und Härtel, and demanded, "What's this?"

"Don't you know it?" she asked—with a note of defensive defiance.

He eyed the title on the cover and was stunned.

"What's the matter?" he heard her say.

"It's my bible," he returned.

"The Well-Tempered Clavichord?"

"Yes. If I were doomed to the proverbial island and the proverbial book, it would be this."

He caught a quick glance of hers and saw her turn to the keyboard of the machine. He watched her small white fingers dance back and forth over the keys.

"Doesn't that hurt them?" he ventured sympathetically.

Without looking up, she said: "It stiffens them."

He retired to his desk, leafed over the Well-Tempered Clavichord and tried to connect this most glorious of testaments with the strange circumstance in which he had stumbled across it. Imagine discovering the things he had pumped by the hour, back in his hermitage at Aeolian Hall, in an office on Wall Street. Here were the notes themselves and there was a girl, not much more than a girl, who sat down in front of them just as she sat at that machine—and probably rattled them off with the same dare-devil speed and equanimity with which she was earning her livelihood. He put the book in the case and

rolled it up not a little reverently. Old man Bach—a clavichord—and a girl who looked like a lady in Goya.

Gently he ventured: "Won't you play for me sometime?"

"Oh no—" came the swift rejoinder and confusion overwhelmed her.

He liked this shyness of hers. It wasn't the customary self-parade of the average virtuoso, but the humility any genuine interpreter feels in front of a masterwork. In all probability, she didn't rattle off the preludes and fugues. Nor was there the least equanimity in the performance. He wondered who her teacher might be—and asked her. She had received a scholarship at the Von Ende Conservatory.

Hm. So far so good. He wondered about the teachers there—all of them fine, no doubt. But were they really as helpful—as he wished them to be? In a school of any sort, no matter how efficient, did a pupil receive the special instruction one deserves as a separate being? He shook his head dubiously and listened to the keys of the machine. Hoping he might be able to help her, he turned to her again and, in the firmest tone he could command, insisted she must play for him. She stopped typing, and an argument ensued—which Krimmie lost dismally.

He had never encountered a human being the equal of this one in stubbornness. When he asked, as a necessary introductory measure, whether he might call on her one evening, she capitulated. As for playing for him, he would have to wait till the end of time. "We'll see about that," he challenged her. After quite a few visits, unproductive as far as the piano was concerned, he hit upon the expedient of bringing his mandolute along. Perhaps, by playing for her, he could gradually cajole her into joining him in duets, and eventually induce her to try one or two numbers alone.

Dorothy—as he was now permitted to call her—had a remarkable fund of responsiveness to things apprehensive of

beauty, and the more fiery and romantic their spirit, the more her black eyes would glow. She also attached herself to anything at all susceptible of a tragi-comic interpretation—a rare attainment in Krimmie's experience with listeners. No one number he played, chanted or read to her—he began bringing manuscripts fairly soon—required an explanation. She was alive to the meaning of certain turns or phrases which had not only puzzled heads much older than hers, but had sent his professional cronies into wool-gathering. Her devotion to the work of contemporary poets before his arrival at the office did not account for the phenomenon. Devotion to his contemporaries was an event to be grateful for anywhere—but understanding on top of devotion? The discovery gave him the greatest happiness, and so, each time he came, he brought manuscripts submitted for publication in Others, and manuscripts of his own. She always professed a preference for the latter. This nearly settled the matter then and there. He might have suspected her profession as a bit of personal flattery, pardonable under the romantic circumstances of their meeting, had he not learned that Dorothy, whenever she had anything to say, no matter how it might offend, said exactly what she felt. Had she not criticized and made him change more than one line of his? "You're almost as honest as they come," he declared.

"I have three grown-up sisters," she explained—an enigmatical remark at the time.

Soon, he would lay his reading matter aside—much though he loved and craved her comments—and turn to the mandolute as a possible ruse for inducing her to play, not necessarily for, but with him. One evening, while browsing among a pile of musical volumes in which Bach and Beethoven predominated, he spied a volume of the violin sonatas of Mozart. He pulled out the book and looked at her. But she insisted that he play the tone-poems she was already familiar with, and

never seemed to hear too often. "First I want to try these things," he replied evasively, and then told her the violin and mandolute registers were identical. "I've never tried them before, and as I've always played more by ear than by note, you'll have to be patient with me."

Dorothy was glad to hear that she had something he wasn't familiar with, and then confessed she played nearly all of the sonatas with one of her Danish brothers-in-law. "So you play with him, do you?" he demurred. The question embarrassed her. After an interminable and ever-varied list of excuses—which Krimmie brushed aside by reverting to her admission—she finally agreed to sit down and accompany him in the first sonata. He would have demurred at "accompany" had he not caught the word as a curtain behind which she might lose her self-consciousness. He drew a chair next to hers, and after another series of elusive intervals they began the first movement. Fortunately, he committed a number of errors in *tempo*. These drew her out of herself. Not critically, but gently, she ventured to correct him. He had noticed her unerring instinct for *tempi,* and censured his own incompetence for the mistakes he had made. As a matter of equal truthfulness, Dorothy was indirectly to blame for his errors. He had busied himself at one and the same time reading his score and listening to her. She played deliciously, notwithstanding her nervousness. Then, too, he found himself watching her out of the corner of his eye. There were places in the movement where several measures of blessed relaxation came to the violin part, and he employed the rests to the best advantage. She scowled at her solos with a face so anxious to make something better than a bad impression on him—that his heart went out to her further. If she made any mistakes, it was during the solos, and she turned on him with— "Why did Mozart give the violin so many rests?"

"So I might look at you," he responded.

That finished Mozart with her, and Krimmie could only induce her to play again by turning to the violin sonatas of Beethoven, where there were, as anyone could see, not so many of these infernal rests. He therefore preferred Mozart and claimed Beethoven was too much for a mandolute. By such slow degrees, and after almost despairing that he would ever hear Dorothy and Bach together, he eventually carried this stubborn wall. For some reason only known to herself, she was absolutely at home with the father of music, whereas, among lesser and easier composers, she encountered numerous obstructions. Her adoration of Bach was childlike. And yet, she made the most universal of men sound as simple and natural as water running over stones. Krimmie realized the inordinate technical perplexities of mastering the contrapuntal intricacies of the fugues. If one needed—as someone has said—ten ears to listen to the many simultaneous voices, what did one need in the way of wrists and fingers? Whatever the requirements, the girl he listened to, and loved to listen to, had been adequately endowed by nature. . . .

Many fiery elements, none of which could be dissociated from the rest, drew the two people closer. Enchantment permeated the room, but the quiet joys it cast over them were shadowed with melancholy. Krimmie was still harrowed with complications and a condition of nervous exhaustion after the recent strain. He had told Dorothy he was married, along with the circumstance, hopeful for them, to which the state had been reduced. She didn't mind that he was married—now that the separation had set in. But she didn't seem at all prepared to consider marriage herself. Nor did Krimmie urge anything of the sort at once. Despite their feeling for each other, she was much too young in worldly experience for such a sudden thought, and he much too involved in the final solution of the older problem. He had told Christine about Dorothy, and she was overjoyed. But she cautioned him a

little; reminded of their elopement, he must be careful not to rush into rashness again. He was ready for rashness again—even more than the first time—but he knew only too well that in fairness to Dorothy he would have to free himself with respect to certain Christian laws and customs before he could propose the step. Against the background of a misstep so recent, notwithstanding the comparatively happy solution of the dilemma, he was terrified lest he drag still another person into a passionate action. The more so as the feeling between these two was of an impetuous consistency threatening to carry away the most obstinate circumspection.

Krimmie's old chess pal continued to shake his head over the hellish hindrances imposed by the laws of the state, and finally advised him that the best course for him to pursue for a while lay in a complete break with the city of his birth. Harassed and weary with this phase of things, Krimmie accepted his counsel and sorrowfully imparted the news to Dorothy. She was equally silent and sorrowful. They tried to console each other with what would happen as soon as he returned. He had saved quite a little money in Wall Street, and had a notion that he ought to set out for Chicago and then drift to the other extreme of the country—until his affairs blew over. Mr. Krauss gave him a leave of absence, with a hearty—"You need a rest, my boy. And don't hurry back. Your position will always be open to you." The diplomat was also grateful for the substitute Krimmie introduced him to—the poet, Skipwith Cannéll.

After a mournful evening, Krimmie parted from the one being he was sure could make life live again. And reach into depths and heights more glorious than he had ever known. But first he must bring her more than a shadow of the hope he had once felt himself to be. He was confident she would inspire him to it. And carry him far beyond any point he had set out to achieve in the past. She had recently shown what

one phase of their life would grow to. He had finished his initial attempt at a short play on love—a free verse experiment in which he treated the three characters of the plot as he might have handled a trio of instruments in a sonata movement, had music been his medium. He was somewhat shocked that this effort at such a time should have dropped into the mould of a light-hearted scherzo. He couldn't account for the mood and, positive that the work had been composed carelessly and as a challenge to conventional decencies, wished to destroy it. But he thought he'd better read it to Dorothy first. He was ashamed of the stuff as he intoned it for her. The rhythm and interplay of voices came out just as he had planned them. But the spirit of the thing—no, it would never do. She was even more vehement in arguing that it would. And as she had proven herself a better dialectician than himself, she convinced him that the script—if he would only change something here and there—must not be destroyed. The play she saved was one which has since become his most quasi-popular composition: Lima Beans. . . .

XII

CHICAGO

LEAVING Others in the hands of John Marshall, the new publisher, Krimmie departed for Chicago. He had a host to look forward to there, the machinist, Billy Saphier, from whom he had received an invitation to share a studio on West South Water Street, right over the Chicago River, and among the noises and stenches of this most picturesque of market-places. With no immediate plan ahead, Krimmie settled in Billy's studio, and began the recuperation his body and spirit demanded. "One never knows how tired one is until one attempts a rest," he reflected.

"Rest here till doomsday," came the ready response.

Billy was still enthusiastic about Others and about every twist and sweep of the city on the shores of Lake Michigan; so he wanted Others to express Chicago in a number to be devoted to the poets of the town and, incidentally, have some fun at "Miss Monroe's expense." Krimmie cared lots for vindication but little for vindictiveness. The issue he therefore discussed with Billy was to be an affair of Chicago writers, regardless of whether they had or had not been snubbed by Poetry. Billy was so pleased with being allowed to collate it, while Krimmie volunteered an occasional word of "fatherly advice," that he rushed around in zigzags and knocked at the doors of Chicago poets—no matter where they had been born. Krimmie was saved from writing to Marshall about the number when he received a gloomy letter stating that the Canadian had been forced to drop his publishing venture, resign Others, place the remaining copies of Mushrooms with Alfred A. Knopf, and return to Canada.

"The old town is at it again," sighed Krimmie.

"Better try the new one," Billy rejoined. "There's no place on the globe like Chicago."

The Roumanian was one of the many happy victims of the slogan, Boost Chicago. At first, Krimmie found it offensive, but as he grew more familiar with the vigorous city and its vital inhabitants, the hearty character of the slogan impressed him. Here was a community challenging the right of New York to "own America"; an aggressive spirit shouting to other communities, "be thyself"; the broad-shouldered titan he had been looking for to lead the new nation out of the craven past. The crude braggadocio of the natives had a forthright power, an irresistible charm. Here was no dependence on New York, and *via* New York, an abject prostration to Europe; but egoism, naïveté, joy. Out of such ingredients, fine spiritual voices had come. Men like Dreiser, Norris, Sandburg, Masters, Lindsay, Anderson. There were no fragile ivory towers, no second-hand replicas of foreign cultures. Each writer breasted the streams of the city and the enveloping lakes and prairies. Contact with the man of the street had not thrust these men into private cells illumined by artificial lamps. It had brought them outdoors with a song in their hearts and throats. Most of the singing was tentative, adolescent, erratic. But all of it contained the expression of a personal experience. Krimmie soon loved the place above all others.

Naturally, a share of this feeling for Chicago had been aroused by the lavish hospitality he received. Beginning with Saphier and never seeming to end anywhere among these people, a round of unostentatious courtesies greeted him. The men on the newspapers, not even excepting the critics, treated him with a kindly regard he had rarely encountered at home. He hardly attempted a move these good fellows did not record in a cordial spirit. Foremost in welcoming the younger activities of the country, Burton Rascoe waged more than one battle

for him in the Tribune. Given to the most violent ecstasies, Rascoe threw open his page to anyone whose work he cared for—especially if the man was unknown. It was thus he had won recognition for a new novelist, James Branch Cabell, and for this reason, among others, the Virginian dedicated Jurgen to him. When he met his anonymous friend, Krimmie was surprised that a man so youthful should be in charge of a literary section, and when he met other critics, his surprise increased.

"Haven't you any graybeards out here?"

"One or two," Burton replied. "But give us time—we'll get rid of them."

"What's become of the dignity of criticism?"

"We leave that to Llewellyn Jones."

That cultivated gentleman, who had an inexplicable fondness for the stolid correctness of Mr. T. Sturge Moore, Mr. Robert Bridges and other elderly Englishmen, treated Krimmie gravely and kindly in the Post and, in the flesh, proved to be a jolly, angelic soul with a decided talent for the telling of *risqué* tales. Then there was John V. A. Weaver, Jr., even younger than Burton, who brought the latest slang into poetry and criticism. And Henry Blackman Sell, Ben Hecht, Keith Preston, Fanny Butcher, Harry Hansen—all of them young, original, daring. Krimmie visualized such folk against some of the Brahmins back home: Brander Matthews, J. Rankin Towse, the Messrs. Henderson, Krehbeil and Finck—men in their fifties, sixties, seventies, with a unanimously crabbed antipathy toward anything adventurous. Even the younger New York critics and the latest penny-a-liner with a living to earn and some book to tear asunder, assumed the pompous self-importance of an academe and delivered excathedraic pronouncements. What an affectionate crew these Chicagoans! They were not afraid to be contaminated by hob-nobbing with the authors of their city. Nor did they hesitate to employ the

implements of prejudice in logrolling their friends across to the public. It was a shameless procedure subversive to the traditional criticism of detachment; but in a new community, in the expression of which so many hot elements concentrated, who but a squeamish intellectual could have demanded detachment? Especially when artists like Dreiser, Cabell, Sandburg, Lindsay, Masters and Anderson were the beneficiaries? After the soil was completely broken and the first shoots had matured, let detachment steal about and winnow things. There would be ample time for that, mused Krimmie; but at the start, let us have everything at once, good, bad and mediocre, so long as the good has some room in the scheme.

Side by side with Sell, Hecht, Preston, Hansen and Weaver—Krimmie found Carl Sandburg in a newspaper office and looking happy in that environment. Until he visited the floors of The Chicago Daily News, the New Yorker had had an idea that journalism thwarted creative writing. But here was a house encouraging the finer energies of its employees and airing its pride in them by broadcasting their latest books under monumental captions. Carl was considerably older than his pals—his lean face and iron-gray hair, with a bang over the left eye, causing him to appear even older than he was. But none of the younger men in the office, nor anywhere else, had as sure an intuition for the lyric impulse of the land nor a manner so unassuming in the expression of it. This son of a Swede named Johnson had a musical voice which everyone, not excluding its possessor, loved to listen to, and he let it out in a never-to-be-hurried drawl rising and falling in a human speech on the edge of song. The pranks and badinage that occupied a good part of his time never affected his pace or inflections. One of Krimmie's first jaunts with Carl brought this out.

They were walking the streets of the devastating Loop—the noisier the better for Carl and the worse for Krimmie—Carl with his pores open to every sensation and Krimmie wonder-

ing when the next truck would demolish him. Half the time, Carl led the way into the gutter, his crazy cap tilted over his right eye, and a Pittsburgh stogie, arrogant, reeking and bitter, sticking out of a corner of his mouth. In the interests of fellowship, Krimmie had to pull at a similar stogie, at the cost of several dizzy spells which made his guide ha-ha with appreciation. When Carl had anything fantastic to say or gave his attention to the courtesy of listening, he often had nothing to add but this villainous ha-ha, with a perfect fifth between the two tones. Pulling at their respective weeds, the two queer birds stopped in front of a stationery store while the former studied the show-window with a mystical eye. "Give him plenty of rope," Krimmie muttered to himself.

Without a word of explanation, Carl led him into the store and confronted the shopkeeper—who frowned like a magistrate. "My friend here," Carl began solemnly, "is an eminent baseball fan from the east, and he puts his coin and loses it on that bunch of bush-leaguers, the Yanks."

"What?" growled the shopkeeper and Krimmie.

"I've been urging him to shift his affections to a flock of real birds like the White Sox, but he's a native of an island the Indians once dubbed Manhattan."

Krimmie began to grin and the shopkeeper to glare.

"You have a nice white ball out there in the window. I'd like to take it out to Lincoln Park and toss it back and forth till he sees the light."

The storekeeper obviously considered Carl an escaped lunatic. "What do you want?"

"The one with the word Rocket between the seams—"

"That's only a nickel—" the man remonstrated—"and it's only for kids——"

"That's all we are," Carl returned and gravely completed the transaction.

For over an hour, Carl and Krimmie, standing long distances

apart, threw high flys at each other, tore around in pursuit of them and succeeded in missing most of them. Whenever they caught one, sometimes with a sensational dive or a leap, the rival would yell—"Oh you Ty" or "you Tris"—and race after the boomerang. Arm-weary, leg-weary, lung-weary, the poets agreed on a truce. Had Carl not instructed his wife—"that Steichen girl," as he called her—to lay an extra plate for dinner, the pair would have played right on into the twilight, moonlight and lamplight of Lincoln Park.

Carl's small cottage in the suburbs, quite like any other in Elmhurst, an outward circumstance he made no attempt to conceal, housed two other kids beside Carl and Clara Sandburg. No sooner had Carl introduced Krimmie to the sister of Eduard Steichen than two flying figures came sliding down the banister from the floor above. Spink and Skabootch, as their father hailed them, had to be caught, embraced and set on the ground for a run to the top of the stairs and another slide down to the foot—a rondo the girls repeated until Carl could catch them no longer. Most of the poets Krimmie knew had no offspring—except what Bogie called "paper babies"—and he reflected on the economic phase of the matter as Mrs. Sandburg called them into the dining-room. Skabootch demanded a Rootabaga story—American fables Carl was writing for the pair—and had to be shooed away with, "You got the gimmes again? Gimme time to get my breath first." After a quiet dinner, Carl turned on the phonograph—rumor has it that he now owns a Ford and a radio—and Krimmie was neither surprised nor shocked when some vociferous jazz blared forth. But Spink begged for "the guitar" instead, and Krimmie joined her in this gimme. More than once, Carl had expressed his love for the mandolute he had heard at the Little Theatre, and Krimmie wanted to square accounts. "Yes," Carl responded, shutting off the phonograph, "but I only sing things by darkies

and sailors, thugs and freight-handlers—you've got a mortgage on the tunes you write." The mandolutist continued to urge the guitarist, and presently heard a fine, sad baritone hauntingly intoning chanties, spirituals, Frankie And Albert—to the accompaniment of the most rudimentary chords. He was thrilled with the performance in a measure no virtuoso had ever given him. Here was one of the sources of Carl's genius. "Man alive!" he cried, "you ought to be doing these things in public." "I've been thinking about it," Carl ventured.

"Some day," he added, "Vachel, you and I ought to put on a three-ring circus at the Auditorium—a sort of minstrel show that'll draw the crowd——"

"Vachel doesn't need an instrument," Krimmie interrupted.

"No, but we'll let him use a tambourine."

The next morning, on the way back to Chicago, Carl handed Krimmie a poem. It was headed Others, A Fantasia For Muskmelon Days:

"Ivory domes . . white wings beating
in empty space . .
Nothing doing . . nuts . . bugs . . a regular absolute humpty-dumpty business . . pos-i-tive-ly . . falling off
walls and no use to call doctor,
lawyer, priest . . no use, boy, no use.

O Pal of Mine, O Humpty Dumpty,
shake hands with me.
O Ivory Domes, I am one of You:
Let me in.
For God's sake—let me in. . . ."

Of Edgar Lee Masters, Krimmie saw nothing on his present visit to Chicago. At their first meeting, he found the author

of Spoon River glowering and humorless and was averse to repeating the adventure. He had much better luck with Sherwood Anderson. At this time, Sherwood was only known for fugitive stories in The Little Review and his novel, Windy McPherson's Son. He was earning his livelihood writing a great deal of excellent copy for an advertising concern. Although Sherwood was fully the age of Carl, he was distinctly younger in appearance and somewhat more mellow in his ways than the man on the Daily News. He was as fond of pranks as Carl, but preferred the more serious form of social badinage. Except for a southern languor of demeanor and speech, which he had not inherited in Ohio, the author of Winesburg might have been mistaken for a prosperous man of affairs. His fine head of auburn hair, large luminous eyes, stocky physique and distinguished gestures gave the impression that life sat well on him. He talked with remarkable ease, the more so as the topic he and Krimmie discussed on their first evening together was the relation between man and woman, a topic Sherwood approached with tender simplicity. Krimmie enjoyed the greatest relief in relating his own story, one he was not in the habit of repeating freely, and his host went over the pros and cons with a refined understanding. It happened that Sherwood was in a similar situation, "the other way round," and this coincidence brought a sympathetic bond to their evening together. "You look pretty much broken up," said Sherwood, like a character in one of his stories; "but I've a notion this has been just the thing for you. Such an experience forces a fellow to face life as it is, and not as he imagines it." Krimmie then told him about Dorothy, and Sherwood smiled and nodded.

He had the air of a man on the threshold of experience, which was indeed the point he had touched with regard to expressing himself. He had obviously done a great deal of knocking about and observed and recorded things with the eye

and hand of integrity. Krimmie felt that Sherwood had been wise in waiting so long before committing himself to paper. The man from Ohio did his living first and his writing after—clearly the natural procedure. Some of his writings had an adolescent tone, but, confessed Sherwood, "I'm a middle-aged adolescent, as it is. With us Americans, things seem to happen that way." Krimmie reflected once more on the paradox that the youthful breaking of the ground was being accomplished by men in or near the middle period of life.

Sherwood was uncertain about the time he might be able to devote to writing in the future. "Outside The Little Review, which can't afford to pay, my stories come back from the magazines. Looks as though I'd be an advertising man the rest of my life." He demanded whimsically how Krimmie managed to eke out an existence as a free lance and edit a paper besides. "Nothing but the force of an old habit," Krimmie replied in key. "Well," Sherwood drawled. "The next time you pass this way, you'll find me in a hall bedroom somewhere on Halstead Street. It'll be pretty late for making that kind of a start, but I see more and more that it's the only one for me. . . ."

Krimmie spent a good many hours at the Poetry office on Cass Street. Despite former differences with Cousin Harriet, he had grown as attached to the little woman and her ways as she permitted a man to be who edited Others. She considered the "yellow dog" a radical offspring of Poetry, the more so as a number of her contributors appeared in the newer periodical —with poems, on more than one occasion, she had rejected and regretted rejecting. Although she had finally accepted a group of Krimmie's poems, she still avoided praising his work as a poet and contented herself with admiring his effort as an editor. She often let him read strange manuscripts that came into the office, and quite a few poems he "A Kd" she eventu-

ally "O Kd" and published. Krimmie loved the little room and the freedom of ingress and egress at his disposal. Regardless of idiosyncrasies, he admired the pioneer spirit that had created such a paper and domicile for the pariahs of the earth, as poets were usually looked upon in a land most of which was given over to the accumulation of matter. Cousin Harriet had gone among the business men of her city and raised the yearly endowment for her venture, and no matter how keenly Krimmie or anybody else took exception to this or that phase of her editorship, one had to revert to beginnings and acknowledge the courage and ability she had brought to the practical solution of a dream that had seemed utterly incongruous. Moreover, the little woman was constantly cracking conservative skulls in the interests of advancing present-day American ideals, and as practically everybody writing verse or poetry eventually appeared in the Chicago magazine, and she saw to it that they were paid for their labor, Krimmie was bound to temper his criticism of her methods in general. He was constitutionally fond of scrappy people, and when such a factor emerged in a poet, he was doubly delighted with the individual. He knew that the pursuit of poetry anywhere required, first, last and always, the most indomitable courage plus more than a manly talent for the art.

At the Poetry office, he met a number of writers whose work he already knew: Eunice Tietjens, Helen Hoyt, Cloyd Head, Zoe Akins, Marjorie Allen Seiffert, Mark Turbyfill, Max Michelson, Henry B. Fuller and others. Henry B., as this distinguished man of letters was affectionately addressed, looked like a delicate facsimile of Bernard Shaw and enhanced the most ordinary discussion with the purest English Krimmie had ever heard an American deliver. Henry B. sounded gently ironical whenever noisy, contemporary topics cropped up, but this note was probably due to the ignorance the younger generation had fallen into with respect to a novelist who was clearly

the finest artist of his era and a much finer artist than the great majority of writers of the day. Even so, the kindly old aristocrat never shunned the younger generation, but acted in an advisory capacity on the editorial board of Poetry. All the people Krimmie met at the office, several of whom also contributed to Others, were hospitable, and none more so than Cloyd Head, the author of Grotesques and the hope of Chicago in the realm of the theatre. Cloyd wanted Krimmie to settle in town and start a little theatre with him. But this discussion, returning each time the two men meet, remains a discussion.

For some extraordinary reason, never clear to the pioneers of the town, Chicago had neglected to support Maurice Browne's Little Theatre, though the auditorium in the Fine Arts Building only needed ninety-nine people per evening to carry the venture. After the demise of Browne's organization, other ventures, in no wise comparable, emerged in other parts of town, but none of them received the proper encouragement from a community more self-conscious than any other in recognizing indigenous efforts. Krimmie could not understand why Chicago, with her tremendous spirit and colossal material advantages for feeding the spirit, had done practically nothing toward providing the new dramatist with a home, as she had done with regard to her poets, novelists, artists, musicians. Compared with Manhattan Island, here were acres of opportunity that did not conflict with real-estate problems, and yet scarcely one acre in a soil so spacious had been consecrated to a native theatre. Even a little theatre at the start—and there were little theatres most everywhere else—would have been something to tear the captive playwright out of the grip of Broadway. With Chicago as the dramatic capital to supply and be supplied by the surrounding Middle-Western cities, Krimmie visualized this area as the logical centre for developing the movement against commercialism in the theatre, a dream which must come to pass if the dramatic world was ever

to be freed, in part at least, from the octopus inhibiting original expression. Meanwhile, the inhabitants flocked to second-rate, road-company versions of Broadway productions, sometimes a year or two late in arriving, in preference to making a drastic, independent move in keeping with "Boost Chicago." Not even Cloyd Head could elucidate the mystery.

In the Aldis circle in Lake Forest, Krimmie heard more about little theatres, saw the outdoor theatre Mrs. Aldis had built, and met many charming people who were trying to cope with American problems. The most outstanding was a soft-mannered gentleman named Martyn Johnson, a discontented member of the editorial staff of the most antiquated magazine in Chicago, The Dial. There was a scheme on foot for Johnson to take over The Dial and modernize it. The idea was unpopular with the natives, not because he planned to change the policy, but because he wished to move the magazine to New York. At the time Krimmie met Johnson, this new pioneer was having difficulty raising the necessary funds for buying out the present owners. He asked Krimmie how writers in the East might react to a move of the sort and whether he could put him in touch with critics who might write for the venture. "The only one I believe in," Krimmie replied, "doesn't live in New York, but in Boston. He lost his job on the Herald down there for espousing unpopular causes, and once wrote a magnificent diatribe called The Spirit Of American Literature. If you can lure that fellow out of retirement, you'll be doing the country a service. His name is John Albert Macy."

Johnson made a note of the name. Krimmie urged the prospective editor to keep The Dial in Chicago. But Johnson would hear nothing in favor of Chicago. They resembled two men who had changed seats on a see-saw. . . .

The continual round of invitations and festivities eventually exhausted Krimmie. As Billy remarked—and Sherwood as well—what he needed now was a rest from social functions

and a change to far, silent havens like the Rockies and the Pacific. Billy was particularly eloquent in behalf of Reno, Nevada, as a lively type of solitude, and spoke of the purple sage and purple hills as the best antidote against civilization. The thought of Reno gave Krimmie certain humorous qualms, and he shook his head.

"You can take the Denver and Rio Grande Railway in any case," the machinist argued. "There's no other like it for seeing the Rockies and sliding from the snow to the orange blossoms." Krimmie bought a tourist ticket for Los Angeles, *via* San Francisco. He left Others with Billy, and the next address to appear on the cover was the one in West South Water Street. Likewise the subtitle, A Chicago Number. Krimmie, temporarily relieved of this last physical burden, headed for the golden west.

The latest little letter from Bay Ridge accompanied him, and like the rest she had sent him, it was signed, Yours. . . .

XIII

TRANSCONTINENTAL

More and more objectively, as Krimmie crossed the continent, he mused upon the prospect of other movements starting up in the smaller cities and towns west of Chicago. He had rendered a few recitals of his poems and tone-poems in Chicago, quiet events auguring the possibility of earning one's livelihood on the road in the independent character of a troubadour, of coming into more varied contact with the people of a polyglot nation and of seeing that nation not as an offshoot of any one metropolis, but as a huge mass of settlers erecting permanent places of their own. He knew that so far most of these places, driven by a sheepish commonalty of interest in the acquisition and aggrandizement of a material prosperity, were mechanical reproductions of the older cities and the competitive ideals of that American invention, standardized advertising. But he had begun to find intermittent signs, however slight, of a groping dissatisfaction with materialism as an end in itself on the part of enough malcontents to encourage the belief that, in the course of time, such people would seize the leadership of their communities and develop cultural centres. Despite tragic evidences that the very great majority of Americans were still devoted to the cult of speed and ugliness and the conventions of Main Street, he was passionately aware that a new era lay beyond the horizon. It was poignantly clear to him, especially as he traversed the great plains and tunnelled or bridged the Rockies, that the first pioneers and their progeny had had a stupendous battle with the superhuman forces of nature. The sight of a cluster of miners' hovels clinging to the side of a mountain filled him with pity

and tenderness, and a spirit of tolerance pervaded and subdued his former impatience with his money-grubbing countrymen.

He had only to sit, under the guidance of an aged Indian, in one of the ancient cliff dwellings near Santa Fé, and let his eye roam across the expanse of waste and desert, to realize the heroic littleness of man in the lap of nature. Even the glorious pagan culture of the Indian was now but a relic and a memory, thanks to the brutal inroads of the white race and the superb nonchalance of time. In the past century and a half, a mere breath from the lungs of eternity, the European and his descendants had gathered the ant hills man in his pride calls cities. From his hole in the cliff, the seething metropolis at the mouth of the Hudson, a thing Krimmie began to love as he sat there, seemed to him a speck overrun with beings so minute as to be indistinguishable. He thought of Broadway with a definite leniency as one of the thread-like lanes the ants had shaped through a continual, rather helpless running back and forth in anxious, uncertain zigzags. What more could one ask in so short a time of mammals so infinitesimal? The pathos of distance enveloped them in a shroud and a dirge. He put one or two queries about the past to the octogenarian smoking beside him, and getting only grunts in response, returned to himself. In reflection, he seemed the most superfluous atom on earth, and in such a mood of self-abasement, his tolerance of his fellows grew to admiration and respect. He tried to rehearse the task faced by the men who had forced their bodies into and over the Rockies in an effort to dig themselves into the bowels of an illimitable area in space. How they must have fought with privation and death in order to build a house or two for their families. What soul could have escaped being stupid, clumsy, uncouth, against such gigantic odds? And what fine art—the most spiritual of elements and therefore the slowest to achieve expression—could have come to life in this wilderness of stone and sand until such a land of mystery and

terror had been conquered and converted into human habitations? . . .

There were many cities now down the sides of mountains, in valleys, along the banks of rivers and the shores of the Pacific. Most of these had given little or nothing as yet to the records of the creative spirit. Nor was there more than an occasional being who gave any promise of inspiring a great local movement to rise about him. Krimmie met a man like George Sterling in San Francisco, with a fine record in the handling of old, poetic forms; but what was George attempting in the matter of leadership beyond urging his followers to devote themselves to European husks of formalism as the only receptacles for an American to pour himself into? Along the whole coast, no man challenged George's supremacy as a craftsman, and no one youth, however crude, sang something of his own in a speech redolent of the California climate and soil. The garden spot of America, "God's own country," well under magnificent cultivation nearly the full length of its thousand miles, with a romantic Spanish and a pioneer American tradition imbedded in the earth, had produced no vital, far-seeing interpreter. Crass little mud-piles in the Middle West had their singers and tellers of sagas, while this vast territory of beauty and healthfulness remained as arid as the monotonous blue of its summer sky. Jack London, after a splendid beginning, had sold himself to the highest bidder among the Eastern commercial magazines. So had Bret Harte before him. And instead of a lusty progeny, a brood of young Whitmans, Thoreaus and Melvilles, California had given voice to sentimental optimists, moving picture scenarios and fatuous complacencies in general.

Los Angeles, the metropolis of the "man-made country," had dedicated itself to abundant forms of quackery, religious and cultural, in the midst of a real-estate boom and tumultuous get-rich-quick schemes second to no other in America. Several woman's clubs, two or three little theatres, something vaguely

representing a university and a symphony orchestra fostered the intellectual activities of the community: anæmic reproductions, as a rule, of the safe and sane classics of Europe and the Orient. In the days of 1916, the prominent foreign visitor infested every lecture platform. Almost any third-rate novelist or poet from England drew down the exorbitant fee his agents demanded and, in the absence of any deep-rooted self-respect on the part of his hearers, was engaged and ogled indiscriminately. Hindoos were likewise rated at a premium, and if a particularly suave exemplar could insult his audience by daintily calling attention to the hiatus between Indian culture and the barbarism of the states, he was assured of the most prolonged applause and a re-engagement at a higher figure. After witnessing such spectacles, Krimmie had to salt his dream about the future of independent localities with many a pinch of scepticism. But an incorrigible mania for sifting anything of value from the mass and weight of a gloomy experience caused him to return to his quest for the least sign of a development in American communities.

Thus it was that he revelled in a recital rendered by Vachel Lindsay at one of the woman's clubs in Los Angeles. If the organization helped Vachel "trade his rhymes," there was that much to be said for the ladies, though most of them looked rather uneasy as they sat knitting or chatting and waited for the "corn-fed Middle Westerner" to open his program. Krimmie, from his chair in the rear, hugely enjoyed the nervous tension on every hand. For him, as well as for the club, this was to be Vachel's *début,* and he knew from hearsay what a dynamic, demoniac performance lay in store. Vachel began harmlessly enough with a group of his dulcet moon poems delivered *pianissimo.* Some of the ladies looked relieved; the rest seemed disappointed. Presently the poet announced The Santa Fé Trail as his next number, and Krimmie leaned forward. Vachel carried his innocent *pianissimo* up to the point

in which the first brazen motor-car, racing along from the East, makes its appearance on the old Indian trail. Then he dropped his piccolos and flutes, sounded the deeper instruments in his lungs and the quick beat in his hands and feet and chanted and stamped with abandonment. Suddenly, more autos raced past on their roaring way westward, and Vachel bellowed names like an announcer in a Union Depot—

"Cars from Concord, Niagara, Boston,
Cars from Topeka, Emporia, and Austin—"

and marching up and down like a negro preacher in a cake-walk trance, shouted exultantly—

"While I sit by the milestone
And watch the sky,
The United States
Goes by."

Then followed the "snapping explosiveness" of the auto-horns—

"Here comes the *dice*-horn, here comes the *vice*-horn,
Here comes the *snarl*-horn, *brawl*-horn, *lewd*-horn,"

only to be interrupted by the song of the Rachel-Jane, the *pianissimo* refrain—

"Not defeated by the horns
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—
Love and life,
Eternal youth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet."

The women had turned to a congregation swaying to the beat of the chant and the step on the stage, and no matter how syncopated the rhythm or how sudden the changes in pitch,

mimicked the poet rapturously. The close, with its whispered cadence, was greeted with an awe-struck silence and then an explosive pandemonium. Knitting, gossiping and kindred concerns had been forgotten, and Krimmie got up and, tempted to jump on the chair, applauded the audience as well as the miracle-man. . . .

Across from San Francisco, in Berkeley, the beautiful seat of the state university, Krimmie basked in the advantages of a visitor's membership in the Faculty Club, a cosy hostelry steeped in a grove of live oaks. Here he accidentally encountered an old boyhood associate, Paul Radin, who not only recalled their days together in the school on Ninety-sixth Street, but reminded him of one of the things that had slipped his memory. Paul, now an anthropologist on the staff of the faculty, and his brother Max, of the law department, had founded a school-paper to which Krimmie had been elected chess editor, and this magazine, printed on a typewriter and distributed among schoolmates, had been called The Nonpareil and its editors and contributors Nonpareils. He laughed at the absurd connection this recollection had with his subsequent activities, and at the freak of forgetfulness which had erased it from his consciousness.

It was through Paul and Max, Krimmie had been proposed and elected to the Faculty Club, and for the first time he learned something about a university and campus life. He was treated to a deal of guarded hostility by most of the members. The head of the anthropological department, A. L. Kroeber, and Robert H. Lowie, his chief assistant, accepted him cordially, and Krimmie wondered why he fared so well with anthropologists. Most of the members of the English department snubbed him or treated him with a type of superior tolerance, and he was made to feel that his excursions away from English traditions and his championship of various black sheep who wrote free verse acted as an automatic taboo. He

received one or two fairly friendly attentions from the recluse of the university, a misanthrope named Ryder, the head of the Sanskrit department. Obviously, between Sanskrit and free verse, or anthropology and free verse, there were no social barriers. Another man who locked elbows with the Eastern visitor was Alexander S. Kaun. But Sasha belonged to the Russian department, was an old friend of Bodenheim's and Saphier's and a contributor to The Little Review.

Krimmie spent several weeks on the campus, and except for the sporadic incivilities, enjoyed himself heartily. The bracing air, the groves of live oak and eucalyptus, the voluptuous hills, the view of the Golden Gate across the bay in an opalescent setting, invigorated him. He did not envy the thousands of students—as he might have some years before—striding back and forth and imbibing so many different things in so many different lecture halls. Life had brought him things he would have lost in classrooms, and the books he had read he had opened only as he needed them. So little did he find of contemporary affairs in the California curriculum, he reached the hypothesis that the future of the country, the ideal he and his fellows felt so profoundly and worked so industriously for, had no place in the present museum. Paul had tried to persuade certain officials to let Krimmie address the students on modern American poetry, but the overlords politely declined the suggestion. One of them expressed the regretful opinion that a man who had never been to college and had no degree to show for it was not a proper figure to sit in the chair of a professor. Krimmie smiled at his boyhood chum and told him what a mess he had made of his high school examinations, and how his father would sigh, *Noch so alt und doch so dumm.*

After a wonderful week of tramping among the redwoods north of San Francisco, a trip he undertook with Paul, Kroeber and Lowie, Krimmie planned the quickest possible return to New York. He had just received word from his

lawyer that a divorce had been granted to Christine. The news filled him with the most extravagant joy, and he sent it at once to Dorothy. A day or two later, Christine wrote him that the Church did not recognize their marriage, since it had not been performed under the rites of catholicism, and so she and Charles were free to go ahead in accordance with their hearts' desire. He wrote her a response, full of reciprocal felicitations. Then he sent a telegram to Dorothy, telling her he was on his way back. Love, gratitude, impatience, rode high in him as the train left San Francisco for the Santa Fé trail and the East. A small dark figure at the other end of the continent beckoned to him. Five or six eternal days—and they'd be together again.

En route from Chicago to New York, haunted and beckoned by love, Krimmie wrote another short play in free verse. It had no direct concern with the town he was riding away from nor the town to which he was returning. Nor, seemingly, did it have any contact with reality. Two inanimate porcelain figures, a boy and a girl he called Manikin and Minikin, were sitting on an old mantelpiece and talking back and forth to the metronomic accompaniment of the clock standing between them. They had been sitting up there for over a hundred years, with their backs to each other or facing each other—in accordance with the whim of the servant who took them down and dusted them off each morning. On this particular morning, in replacing them, she had carelessly turned them apart, and there they sat trying to touch each other through talking. The more they talked the more it became apparent that, though they had each other up there even when they couldn't see each other, they went right on longing for closer embraces. Loneliness of one sort or another held them apart though they loved nothing but each other and had nought but the maid to disturb them. Krimmie heard what they said until even he grew tired of listening, and drew a curtain over their speech.

PART IV
DAWN

I

THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS

When Krimmie returned to New York, his rejuvenation was completed by a promise from Dorothy. Young as she was (ten years younger than he), she had to caution herself a little against allowing her impulses to race off with the thought of what life with him would be, a vision he painted with all the romantic colors at his command. Allied with him, there was every likelihood that some of her æsthetic propensities would at last find appeasement. The intermittent lessons at the conservatory and the few hours she had to herself at the piano, with many a night a tired one after a day in the city, did not give her the necessary confidence in her own ability. Music was forced into a minor situation, a condition against which her temperament protested. It was clear that with Krimmie, whatever his incompetence in the work-a-day world, art would hold a high place at all times, could they but manage the economic problem together.

Practically the whole of her life, or rather the finer shades of it, had been devoted to her family. What she lacked on the outside was richly and unselfishly provided by them. Krimmie became attached to her parents almost at once. He saw them as he might have come to see his parents, were they still alive and he old enough to love them impersonally. Dorothy's mother had the unostentatious attentiveness he remembered in his own, and her father a fondness for impractical dreams identical with the whims his father had pursued. As for the sisters, they were three irresistible arguments for a supplementary devotion to Dorothy. Like her, they were fanatical in their worship of beauty, and each had her own type of radiant

loveliness. He had dreaded most families in the past, having found how they retarded the individual in the group. But this one compelled him to an absolute faith in such a future relationship.

Dorothy would have had every justification for looking upon marriage somewhat conditionally. Protected as she had been at home, a break with the past in exchange for a leap into the dark with a person of Krimmie's uncertainty in practical affairs was a problem of the most serious character, and one he made no attempt to hide from her. He had only to consider his prospects in a material world calmly to admit that they were not much better than heretofore. The tour he had tried in embryo had produced a basis for eyeing the future more optimistically. While he did not see himself as a popular figure on the road, nor had any reason to suppose he would ever become one, he felt that a continued effort in the direction he had undertaken must eventually bring a gradual recognition from a number of strange communities. He took a paradoxical pleasure in reflecting on the support he had won from Chicago. The antagonism in which he was still held in the respectable circles of New York represented an opposition that would act as a powerful deterrent from the earning of even the most rudimentary livelihood in the field of letters at home. But he was already serenely aware that the taboos of Manhattan markets did not prevent a man from appealing elsewhere for the simple products of subsistence.

He was the possessor of a neat fund left over from his trip. It was quite a sum for a free lance who had crossed and recrossed the continent, but it would never do for what he had in mind for Dorothy. He was jobless at the time, Mr. Krauss having courteously refused to let him return to his position. Skip Cannéll had failed to please the diplomat, and an assiduous clerical soul named Smith or Jones had destroyed the poetic

tradition by coming to the office at nine and leaving at six. Krimmie had to hunt for another job. . . .

Meanwhile, he likewise set about investigating a movement which had developed during his absence. Having rented a skylight loft on East Fourteenth Street, a floor long enough to house a little theatre, had he such a project in view, he went down to the village to have a look at a group of players Bill Zorach, the painter, had told him about. Bill had joined this group in the artists' colony at Provincetown, where they had remodelled an old wharf for the production of their own one-act plays. The players had recently moved to New York, led by George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill, and rented and renovated a stable on MacDougall Street, not far from the club in which the now defunct Washington Square Players had undertaken their initial experiment. Zorach was designing sets for these Provincetown Players and advised Krimmie that the group, as groups go, was likely to be liberal toward outsiders and, in case he had a one-act play, he ought to submit it to the directors. Krimmie gave him the script of Lima Beans and accepted an invitation to attend a rehearsal and study the type of play they were putting on. "We're strong on realism and weak on fantasy," the Russian confessed. "Maybe you can supply the latter."

When Krimmie entered the converted stable, a rehearsal was under full steam. The stuffy auditorium lay in darkness, and under cover of it he sat down and watched proceedings. The stage, scarcely large enough to accommodate half a dozen actors, was set in a villainous bar-room, and sailors and longshoremen were roaring and cursing in the raciest language of the sea, cuffing and mawling one another and finally turning on one of their number and sandbagging him senseless. Were it not for the expert characterization of each individual part, thought Krimmie, and the natural sequence of the amazing

events of the plot, that business up there would remind one of an old Bowery melodrama. As he was fond of melodrama, he was entranced with the art the unknown dramatist had brought to bear on an obsolete form. He quickly reflected on Marlowe, Webster, Schiller, Balzac, Hardy. Strip away the poetry and characterization and the skeleton's nothing but melodrama. He was undoubtedly in the presence of a new dramatist.

The actors, noisy and ponderous, revelled in their respective parts and resembled a football scrimmage at its most delirious height. Krimmie thrilled to the hypothesis that at last something was happening in the theatre. These fellows were not effete, like the lamentable Washington Square Players, nor was there any likelihood that they would be taken up by Broadway to be broken on the wheel of popularity. There was no happy ending down here and no room for tragedy uptown. Suddenly, he heard someone in the surrounding darkness roar instructions to the actors. "Where do you think you are—at a tea-party?" the voice called derisively, and the company repeated the scene with redoubled pandemonium. When the house lights went up, Zorach pointed out that the voice belonged to a stocky woman, the stage director, Nina Moise; and then indicated a gaunt, black-haired, lugubrious young man. "That's Eugene O'Neill, the author of the play." The son of James O'Neill, an actor who had given thousands of performances of Krimmie's boyhood favorite, Monte Cristo, had a quiet, elegiac smile foreshadowing the writing of profoundly tender plays, such as The Straw and Anna Christie.

Presently, Krimmie saw several people he had met before: Max Eastman, Ida Rauh, John Reed, Louise Bryant, Hutch Hapgood, Floyd Dell. In some capacity or other, they were members of the company. And he was introduced to the moving spirit of the group, Jig Cook, a white-haired man with a youthful face and delicate manners, and his wife, Susan

Glaspell, the most exquisite writer in the group. He discovered that the main emphasis of the movement—for the first time in his experience of America—was placed on the dramatist. Here was what he had been hoping for in the theatre: a creative group, putting on its own plays and learning the entire profession of stagecraft. They blundered about in the guise of actors and designed and painted their own scenery with the most emphatic earnestness. And they had gathered about themselves a troupe of actors, most of them better performers than the playwrights: O. K. Liveright, Hutch Collins, Charlie Ellis, Jimmy Light, Ann Harding, Mary Pyne, Teddy Ballantine, Jasper Deeter, B. W. Huebsch, Edna St. Vincent Millay and scores of others. Anyone fired with an unquenchable desire to become a thespian, and even anyone who had no such ambition, was commandeered to try a small part in one of the plays. Zorach, who cavorted like an elephant and could never memorize his lines in rotation, was converted into a "heavy," and Louis Ell, the omnipresent stage-hand, carpenter and electrician, into a frolicsome comedian. Louis' wife, Christine, who ran a little restaurant over the theatre, stole enough time from her culinary duties to satisfy her histrionic cravings. The one line she had in many a play filled the auditorium with glee and never removed her from the kitchen long enough for her clients to miss her upstairs. The leading woman of the company, especially when the script called for a tragedienne, was Ida Rauh—"the Duse of the little theatre," as she was dubbed by The Little Review. Max Eastman looked so handsome behind the footlights that he didn't have to act and didn't try, and Jack Reed so debonair that people wondered where he got his reputation as a "red." Floyd Dell acted quite as well on the stage as off, while Harry Kemp ranted like Bottom, the weaver, and tramped about as if life indeed lay underfoot.

After witnessing the first two programs, Krimmie felt rather pessimistic about the reception the directors might

accord to Lima Beans. Keenly though he admired a good deal of the work of the playwrights, he was afraid that their absorption in naturalism would prejudice them against what he was attempting: a fantastic treatment of commonplace themes set to a stylized rhythm. As it transpired, this was precisely the decision the group arrived at almost unanimously —as Zorach confided in a melancholy tone. "They have won such applause with their realism—and the more slapstick the better—that they simply can't see beyond blood and thunder." Naturally, the Russian, who had dedicated his painting to fantasy—a trend in which his wife, Marguerite, shared and surpassed him—wished to design and execute romantic sets. The limitations of the players inhibited such an ambition, and Bill was the more anxious to try his art on Krimmie's script.

One day, Bill advised him that a leading member of the group had threatened to resign if the play was not accepted. Thanks to the pugnacity of this individual, Jack Reed, a compromise was reached and presented to Krimmie. If he would undertake producing the play himself, with some actors outside the personnel, no one of whom believed he could impersonate the lines, Lima Beans would have a place on the third bill of the season. Heartily grateful for the compromise, and to Jack Reed for this first of his opportunities in the theatre, Krimmie accepted the proposal. Trepidation followed right on the heels of the acceptance. Where was he to find the actors and, having enlisted them, how was he to direct them? Outside his imagination, he had never directed a play—except the plays of his childhood, when puppets had done his bidding. As he had written the present scherzo with puppets partly in mind—dancing in accordance with the rhythm of the dialogue —he could have performed it with wooden beings. But where were the humans who would lower themselves to the level of puppetry and maintain a relationship to each other so harmonious as to admit no personal whim into the performance?

Luckily, there were only three characters—two major and one minor—a huckster of vegetables, Zorach promised to undertake. He also promised to undertake the set. Furthermore, two people in the Others movement had had some experience in amateur theatricals—Mina Loy and Bill Williams. It was therefore to these two—poets well versed in the technicalities of free verse—that Krimmie appealed. Both accepted with alacrity—the super-sophisticated Mina sniffing a little at the commonplaceness of the marriage theme, and the self-conscious Bill in terror lest he halt or explode. They had nothing but a room in which to begin their rehearsals, but all four—actors and director—were glad of its privacy. Krimmie opened the rehearsals by taking out a pencil and beating time while Mina and Bill read their lines. Bill resented the baton, charged Krimmie with the affectation of such a notion, but slowly and conscientiously fell in with the author's scheme. The part of the wife—much too light for a person of Mina's worldly experience—nevertheless appealed to her sense of comedy and she grew closer to the character with each rehearsal. As the huckster, Zorach sang with zest and vehemence; and provided a charming set for the play: blacks and whites, based on the screens of Gordon Craig, with spots of color supplied by some bowls and ornaments. The set and props cost two dollars and a half.

Two or three days before the opening night, when the rehearsals were transferred from the private room to the stage of The Provincetown Playhouse, Krimmie's trepidation revived, the more so as members of the group who watched the proceedings looked sceptical and said little by way of encouragement. They were clearly mystified by a thing they were unaccustomed to, and while they were hospitable to Krimmie personally, and loved to eye Mina Loy, wagged their heads knowingly. It was as much as confessing—another experiment like this and we're ruined. At the dress rehearsal,

the play was greeted with additional doubts, but there was an air in the auditorium that the other two plays on the bill, The Two Sons by Neith Boyce (Mrs. Hutchins Hapgood) and Eugene O'Neill's Before Breakfast, might carry the evening. With the radiant Mary Pyne (Mrs. Harry Kemp) playing the part of the wife in the latter, and the author himself reading the character of the husband off-stage—a drama his father had conducted the rehearsals of—O'Neill could be counted on to save the bill, a situation he was to rescue many a time in the future. Mina Loy's costume, a *décolleté* creation, not in keeping with Mrs. Lima, served to fascinate the beholders, but Bill Williams' costume, a weird concoction he had designed and executed himself, met with scanty approval. Bill Zorach's set looked too tenuous. "There's nothing to it," Krimmie heard someone mutter. "It fits the play," responded someone else.

There was the usual packed house on the opening night. No matter how the group tried their patience, Provincetown audiences were loyal down to the last subscriber. Krimmie sat somewhere amongst them, a prey to the utmost confusion and fright. When the curtains parted, and Mina held back her first line to give the set time to take effect, Krimmie was delighted to hear it greeted with applause. Then the play began. People started to giggle. This wasn't so bad. Then they were silent. This wasn't so bad either. Then came Zorach's booming sing-song about the vegetables. Bill Williams entered, stumbling a bit—an excellent effect—and the colloquy with Mina followed rhythmically and naturally. So far so good. Then followed the row over the bowl of string-beans, the husband's malediction, his irate exit, the collapse of the wife, and then the rondo—Mina alone, Zorach and the second duet, with its forgiveness and reunion. The actors were doing beautifully, and not a sound came out of the auditorium. Was the audience enthralled or bored? The final scene interrupted Krimmie's question. Taken at a breathless *tempo,* the

lines scudded by, only to be interrupted by the curtains capering together. Even the stage-hand had played his part to the limit of accuracy.

There was a short silence in the audience—that most terrible moment in any playwright's experience. Then came the most unheard of pandemonium. It choked him, nearly extinguished him. The curtains opened and closed—thanks to the wild hands out front and Louis Ell's calm hands in the rear—while the actors bobbed up and down like puppets on strings. Some friendly soul had the presence of mind to count the curtain calls. There were sixteen. Krimmie rushed back stage to embrace the actors. When Zorach insisted that he take a curtain call and sent up a huge basket bulging, not with flowers, but with vegetables, he fled from the stage. Nor had he the strength to do more than thank the three people who had brought a few sheets of paper to life.

And, somewhere at the heart of it all, he recalled how someone had saved the script from the discard. . . .

XII

THE OTHER PLAYERS

Although Krimmie was elected a member of the Provincetown group, attended some of their meetings, was allowed to read manuscripts and vote on them, he did not feel at home in this new environment. While he acknowledged the influence the players were bound to exert on the future of the American theatre, he realized he did not belong to the inner circle which guided their destinies. He did not begrudge the play-reading committee its choice of the next bill of plays, usually an arbitrary selection seconded or revised by the two or three most powerful members. But he was given the impression his notions were "rather queer," and his own love of experiment, seeking more room for poetry in the theatre, was not seriously encouraged. Not alone was Manikin And Minikin, the next play he submitted, rejected, because of the rigid static demands made upon the actors, "a stillness," he was advised, "no New York audience would sit through," but he found it almost impossible to sway the group toward similar scripts by other writers. A momentary exception was made in behalf of two short plays by Bodenheim, in one of which Saphier had collaborated. They merely mystified the subscribers and scared off the group from a repetition of such an adventure. One of the plays, The Gentle Furniture Shop, eventually appeared in the magazine of the Grand Rapids Furniture people, thus providing Bogie with still another anecdote on himself.

The group had not deviated from its policy to give unknown playwrights a hearing. Krimmie simply felt it was not sufficiently daring and elastic. He had no objection to the fairly constant production of plays by the regulars, led by Gene

O'Neill. In his earliest work, the sombre lover of the sea and sailors had already shown he was the most important creative figure on the horizon of the new American theatre. Had the group fostered no other than O'Neill, its ideal and strenuous effort would have been substantiated. But it also discovered and labored for Susan Glaspell, Djuna Barnes, Floyd Dell, Pendleton King (whose Cocaine remains Krimmie's favorite among Provincetown plays), and many another. There was nothing else for Krimmie but to leave himself open to the temptation of still another venture: the foundation of a theatrical troupe.

He had several talks with Jig Cook concerning the possibility of putting on a bill of poetic plays at his own expense, and the director, seconded by the group, finally advised him he could rent the theatre for a nominal sum during one of the weeks when it was dark. With his skylight loft as a basis for gatherings and rehearsals, Krimmie decided to put his idea to the test. He immediately consulted the Zorachs with regard to sets and costumes, and they cordially agreed to join the new group. Two recent additions to the Provincetown Players responded to his appeal for actors, Kathleen Cannéll, an old friend through Others, and Marjory Lacey-Baker, remarkable for her mastery of English diction. Calling on Bessie Breuer in the Tribune building and imparting his idea to her, he was urged to communicate with her brother, a young, neglected composer, Julian Freedman. As music and the dance were elements Krimmie wanted to round out the bill, he decided to consult the composer. Kitty Cannéll, who, for professional reasons, now called herself Rihani, took charge of the dances and pantomime—and Krimmie knew that this slender, boyish artist would contribute a series of original numbers.

Julian Freedman, American by birth and Viennese in the subtle grace of his personality, proved to be the possessor of an unusual talent for comedy with an undercurrent of tragedy.

Having read Krimmie's most recent play, Jack's House, a tragi-comedy in the language of a primer concerning a "one-room-home," Julian set to work turning it into a "melodrama." Work is hardly the word, since he was a notoriously lackadaisical fellow and enjoyed improvising delicious talks to the exclusion of every other consideration. But Rihani had expressed her desire to play Jack, a speaking part affording her opportunities for pantomime; and so, the dancer joined the author in jogging the composer along. These three people were the leaders of the company with headquarters in Krimmie's studio. In honor of Others, which was still alive, though not as alive as formerly, and with a hope that the long awaited playhouse for artists might crown this experiment, the troupe was christened The Other Players. A communal arrangement throughout had been agreed upon as the natural division of any spoils that might accrue. Kitty and Julian were in desperate financial straits. It therefore devolved upon Krimmie to invest his own funds in the guise of an impresario. Marjory Lacey-Baker was given the part of Manikin. And Courtenay Lemon, a boyhood pal at the Evans Chess Club, was engaged as press agent.

In order to reduce the cast of characters and curtail the expenses confronting him, Krimmie tried out in the rôle of Jack, with Rihani as Jack's wife; but the necessity of moving about in a pattern of pantomimic gradations tripped him up. Fundamentally, he felt the responsibilities of the venture too heavily to attempt anything beyond directing this or that phase of it, and was only too glad to acknowledge that as an actor not even Ballard the Bard was more awful. The part of Jack reverted to Kitty, and Krimmie appealed to the Provincetown group for additional thespians.

Two lovely pale girls, the sisters Millay, had just appeared in a play by Floyd Dell and given an artistic account of themselves. If he could persuade them to come and try out with

the Other Players, one of the sisters would surely do justice to Minikin and the other to Jack's wife. The older and smaller of the two, a mouse-like creature with cat-like movements, was already famous as a poet. Krimmie, while on the reading committee of the Provincetown Players, had enjoyed a morality comedy of hers, Two Slatterns And A King, that would complete the Other bill with an appropriate lightness. It was fortunate that Edna, like the Other Players, was anxious to experiment with poetry in the theatre. The chance to put on her play under her own direction and take part in it with her sister appealed to her. Norma Millay, who was scheduled for the next Provincetown bill as well, would only have time for one of the slatterns; so Krimmie had to find another actress for Minikin. Luie Earl, a doll-like English girl not unlike a Chelsea figurine, volunteered for the part, and the diction she had learned at home fitted in beautifully with the diction Marjory Lacey-Baker had acquired in Boston. He was assured of one beneficence in advance: Manikin and Minikin would behave harmoniously. Tribulations started when Jack's House went into rehearsal.

There was no difficulty with Rihani, who mastered the antics of Jack with skillful resourcefulness. But the pace at which Julian composed the music for the background was so slow that his partners wellnigh despaired of cajoling the whole score out of him in time for the production six weeks hence. The music he had written thus far was so faithful to the moods of the characters and the unfoldment of the plot, and so beautiful in its balancing of the twin masks of comedy and tragedy, that Krimmie was convinced no other American within his experience could have assumed Julian's place—truly more than a compensating circumstance. On the other hand, Edna St. Vincent provoked him by appearing at rehearsals, when she appeared at all, an hour or two in arrears; but she played Jack's wife with so complete an understanding of the pantomimic

demands of the part, that he found still another compensatory consolation. Rihani and Edna looked and acted like puppets, the illusion being heightened by the picturesque circumstance that the former, with her stature of an overgrown boy, was two or three heads taller than the latter, who reduced Jack's large, dreamy gestures to a minimum—the broad legato broken up into its component staccato bits. Meanwhile, the Zorachs were busy at the other end of the loft, painting the sets for the three plays, and fine, fitting patterns gradually emerged. When Jack and his wife took a rest, Manikin and Minikin sat on an improvised mantelpiece, with a metronome to beat out the clock-like *tempo* guiding their dialogue, or the slatterns, Slut and Tidy, courted or were courted by Zorach, the king, absurdly droll with his exaggerated stolidity and the measured solemnity of his quatrains——

> "I am the king of all this land.
> I hold a sceptre in my hand.
> Upon my head I wear a crown.
> Everybody stands when I sit down. . . ."

In the midst of rehearsals, Krimmie added still another venture to his tribulations: the publication of six of his plays on love themes under the title, Plays For Poem-Mimes. Alfred Knopf, having had comparatively little luck with Mushrooms and the first two Others Anthologies, declined to risk the publication of still another debatable manuscript, and Albert Boni refused to look at the thing on the ground that "plays in book form have no sale." He demanded Arthur instead, the novel Krimmie had composed for Tommy and himself, which Albert had read in the days of The Glebe. The author declined the offer because the book had been written under pressure and had not had the advantages of a severe revision in retrospect. Moreover, he thought he might use the material

of the manuscript in a broader canvas some day, covering a broader area and era. A third consideration which hastened his action toward a private publication of the Poem-Mimes was the growing demand for his plays among little theatres. Without further ado, he consulted his old friend Clark, the printer. The Irishman on the ground floor of 232 drew up a kindly estimate and issued a thousand copies of the plays between goldenrod boards, over the firm-name, The Other Press. Since Krimmie had no funds for the circularization of the book and moved about so often in the next year or two that many orders went astray in the mails, the eventual sale of the entire edition almost tempted him to the ironic conclusion that authors ought to publish their own works. . . .

In the course of the six weeks' rehearsals preparatory to the dress rehearsal, Julian, Rihani, the Zorachs, Manikin and Minikin and even the sisters Millay had worked themselves weary in bringing their respective tasks to the point of perfection. To those who were so depleted that another push from the economic fiend might have proved fatal to the harmonic interplay of the group, Krimmie advanced small sums. Fortunately, Clark, the printer, who also set up the literature concerning the company, let him pay for his book in instalments; otherwise, the last of the impresario's savings would have dwindled away. Krimmie had a profound faith in the mutual undertaking of the Other Players and shut his eyes to material considerations. He had to devote so much energy to the practical phases of the venture, in which Dorothy stood by and helped him tirelessly, that he was unable to be present at some of the later rehearsals. But the players were able to conduct these rehearsals themselves, and so harmoniously did matters progress that Krimmie was thoroughly assured of the artistic, if not of the public, success of the bill.

There was no way of gauging the possible extent of the

public response. Few tickets had been sold in advance, and the older and more courteous members of the Provincetown group whom Krimmie consulted were sceptical. The Provincetown Players were now so popular that some of their subscribers might come automatically to anything that held the boards of the converted stable. But the bill was too "high-brow" to appeal to the average units of the huge theatre-going public of the day. One was conscious that members of the foreign population, and particularly artists who followed modern trends, would try to enlist their immediate circles. Through one source and another, this or that member of the group had engaged the active sympathy of men like Albert Gleizes and Marcel Duchamp, the French painters, Carlos Salzedo, the Italian harpist, Nicolai Sokoloff, the Russian conductor, Adolf Bolm, the Russian dancer, Alfred Stieglitz and 291. And there were, among the contributors and readers of Others, a number of people who would not be intimidated by the prospect of beholding something fantastically poetic and free of traditional stage formulas. Besides these, adherents of other experimental groups might be expected to appear at the box-office—The Seven Arts crowd, The New Republic, The Nation, The Masses. By and large, however, the Other Players could hardly figure optimistically on the attendance for the week, and the opening night was an event to tax the strength and courage of the entire ensemble.

As Krimmie hurried back and forth between the box office on a table in the hall and the preparations back-stage for the opening number, he was in such a condition that he proved as ineffectual in one place as the other. He carried his excited and exhausted body on the shoulders of a frenzied dream, and was unable to recognize his friends as they came into the theatre. But most of the people who crowded into the hall wore strange faces, and he stared at them incredulously. Who were they, where did they come from, who had sent them?

By the time for the curtain, the house was full and other people were crowding on the heels of the first comers. They managed to find standing room along the side walls and in the rear, while others sat down on the floor between the aisles or at the foot of the front row of seats. Several tried to crawl up on the stage itself and dangle their legs over the footlights, but these were shoved off by Louis Ell. Krimmie rushed backstage, exploded with the news out front, gave the faint signal to start, and stole back to the audience. He crept into a hole in the crowd, next to Dorothy.

Manikin And Minikin, Rihani's beautiful, static dances, Edna's rollicking morality play, Jack's House, with Julian playing the music on a piano behind the Zorach set—passed on their way to the final curtain and left an infectious path behind them. The evening was an intoxicating success. So were the other evenings. So was the Saturday matinée. Crowds came to each performance, the overflow stood or sat on the floor, and another overflow had to be turned away. Some of the first-nighters came a second or a third time, but Albert Gleizes carried off the honors by attending six successive performances. Though he understood scarcely more than the rudiments of English, *"mon cher Albert"* was always one of the first to arrive, mincing and miming down the aisle to the accompaniment of Jack's jaunty ditty, which he sang like a Boulevardier —"We have no dishes to eat our meals from."

The little group of players, torn with delirious joys, lost their heads. Not only had Krimmie's investment been returned, but the company had earned several hundred dollars above the outlay. Instead of dividing the sum, as per the original compact, the more adventurous members, led by Kitty and Julian, wanted to re-invest the fund in one of two ways: in another bill at the Provincetown or an extension of the present bill at an uptown theatre. But they had to vacate the Provincetown because it was again in use by the native com-

pany. And the leaders of the older group turned a deaf ear to any rental of the theatre in the near future. Well, argued Julian and Kitty, we ought to continue the present bill uptown. Lots of people have been turned away, others want to see it again and still others, learning about it from hearsay, are clamoring for a chance to view it.

Broadway was out of the question. The rentals were exorbitant. But there was a little theatre three or four blocks east of Broadway, that the company might rent at three hundred dollars a week—the owner advised them. The Bramhall Playhouse had a larger seating capacity than the Provincetown—thanks to the balcony overhead—a better stage equipment, commodious, plush-seated chairs and a voluptuous atmosphere in general. What Kitty, Julian, Krimmie and the others didn't know at the time was this: it was the whitest white elephant in town. The troupe innocently moved up to East Twenty-eighth Street, the Zorachs made the necessary cuts and additions in the sets, and ohs and ahs passed among the members as they eyed the charming auditorium and enjoyed the warm silence, so cheering after the draughts and noises that came through the walls of the stable on MacDougall Street. In the course of a week, including a Wednesday as well as a Saturday matinée, the warmth and silence turned to chills and loneliness. Barely one hundred people attended the eight performances, and the company not only lost the entire profit of its performances in the village, but Krimmie, in a desperate attempt to bolster the situation, had re-invested his original fund. This likewise went on the toboggan. He spent the last night in the box-office of the charming lobby of the Bramhall—an outpost he had occupied all through the week—and tried to maintain an obstinate cheerfulness in the face of the cataclysm. But his enthusiasm had forsaken him.

Dorothy and her sisters came out of the auditorium, drooping with sympathetic melancholy. Alfred Stieglitz shook him

by the hand and assured him that "such an idea would have gone in Germany." Albert Gleizes, no longer singing, "we have no dishes," said something about "you must try such a dream in Paris some day"—and then a dozen or thirteen people, looking like stragglers retreating from a battlefield, filed out. Krimmie tried to straighten himself for the ordeal back-stage. But as he joined the silent troupe of Merry Andrews, two or three of whom had broken down under the strain, he could find no phrase to hide what he felt. As the company quietly disbanded, he went over to Zorach and Louis Ell and helped them pack up the remains. . . .

III

ALONE AND TOGETHER

During a summer of abject monotony, a period spent in a cottage on Staten Island rented by some of the members of the defunct organization by raising and pooling enough funds to meet the expenses of a primitive livelihood, Krimmie was reduced for a while to a state almost bordering on despair. One human being had a faith in him so tenacious and watchful that it not only survived the trials of the theatrical venture but slowly revived his faith in himself. Whatever anyone else might conclude with reference to his persistence in the face of material setbacks and the seemingly eccentric turns taken by his devotion to art, a quest so fiercely concentric it blinded him at times to all other considerations, Dorothy, suffering with Krimmie and enduring the blind spots as well, stood by him. Proud and quick-tempered though she was, and resentful of thoughtlessness, she had an intuitive way of penetrating to the heart of his life. His worldly defeats, the ridicule in which he was held by the more successful members of his profession, and even the scorn he felt for himself in moments of egregious disillusionment, meant absolutely nothing. She passionately derided the defeats and the criticism, not by a direct attack on them, but through an indirect attack on Krimmie. There was no effort of his finer self which could possibly fall short of her estimation. It was this self she riddled with such fire that he was lifted out of the lowest despondency to which he had ever descended, into the firmest resolution he had ever known. There was one thing worth living for now toward which previous contacts acted as a chain of glorious preliminaries.

There was so much they yearned for, rich with simple parallels, that no matter what they might achieve together, out of each other selfishly or for each other unselfishly, it would be something from which to reach out still farther. They were a small world, alone and together, no active circumstance of the outer world could alter. They would need a corner or two in that vast place for their livelihood; in every other way, they needed but each other. Being had in it at all times a desire and power of becoming a new day composed of two growing yesterdays. Neither had a name for the mystic impulse that led them. They had no language of the tongue for love. Nature took care of speech, and silence of superfluous definitions.

They needed every moment of each other for a summer so ghastly. Reduced to the lowest economic level at a season when the income of the average free lance is most precarious, Krimmie was also menaced by the entrance of America into the European war and the swift arrival of conscription. Just inside the age-limit for service, he was confronted with a blunt card calling him for a physical examination. Utterly sick with the sight of conglomerate bodies, herded in the room of inspection, being weighed and measured and thumped and appraised with a scientific regard to their physical fitness for what the English term cannon-fodder, and the Germans, *Kannonenfutter,* Krimmie submitted his own body. The underlings who took it in charge, without troubling him with a single unessential comment, discovered that his pulse beat a little too fast, that he was troubled with astigmatism and was considerably below the required weight for a man five feet eight inches tall. They curtly nodded in his direction, and Krimmie slipped on his clothes, went home and awaited further developments. A day or two later, he received another card, apprising him that he had been placed in Class 5B, exempting him from military service—for the time.

On her side, Dorothy, a being with the tireless energy of a perfect machine, had suddenly been smitten with a furious attack of diphtheria. Horrific days followed. Krimmie, frequently forced to borrow his fare from Staten Island to Brooklyn, and with a heart as doleful as a clod, was the only person, outside the family and the physician, permitted to call on her. At a white bedside, he found someone so small and pale, he only recognized the look in her eyes and the tone in her voice as a relative of the girl he had known. She seemed to be fading under his glance and his own life to be fading with hers. But his strange visits, and his indomitable propensity for cheerful talk, had the effect of making her smile like a trusting child. The faintest trace of such a smile caused him to redouble his effort and to concentrate on leading her thought away from the present and into their future together. The present might be a thing one had to cling to with all one's faculties in order to gather the strength to live through it—but it was a topic to be sedulously avoided in conversation.

Dorothy entered a crisis so severe that even Krimmie was gently forbidden to see her. He haunted the streets like a shadow—pursued by terrors and premonitions—wretched in his ineffectual isolation—inconsolable in his loneliness. By the greatest good fortune, thanks to her constitution and the constant care to which she was tenderly subjected by the family surrounding her at all hours, Dorothy passed through the crisis. Her convalescence was a slow affair, but so long as Krimmie was permitted to see her once more and she to see him, neither cared about the pace of the recuperation. Under the idiotic extravagance of his joy, her color began to return and her eyes to shine as of old. As she sat in an armchair, propped up by white pillows that enhanced her color and showed her cheeks and arms were growing rounder, he read to her, played for her, talked like a loon for her. Most of all she loved the talk as it rapturously limned the life they would

soon start together. In order to cheer her completely, he showed her the 5B card from the conscription board. She looked at it joyously and then looked at him. "I want to take care of you too," she said, and in order to humor her, he nodded. But he was already feeling better than he had ever felt before.

By the early fall, Dorothy was able to return to her desk in Mr. Krauss' office, and Krimmie, determined to drive experiments behind him and pursue jobs with a vengeance he had never devoted to jobs heretofore, was taken on trial by an advertising agency on Union Square in the capacity of a writer of copy. He passed the first test put upon his ingenuity by the management—the composition of a short panegyric setting forth the irresistible eloquence of a thing called The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse, by the Spanish pot-boiler, Blasco Ibañez. He abhorred and despised it as literature, and its fulsome propaganda toward a universal hatred of the Germans *en masse* was hardly the type of revilement to be disseminated throughout America at a time when the Germans were on the point of laying down their arms and peace was apparently near. Nevertheless, he shut his heart against the nausea the work aroused in him and, not knowing just how to approach his task, wondered whether a few lines of free verse, more attractive and legible in design than the usual prose copy, might not prove the quickest and most effective method of luring readers in the direction of Señor Ibañez and his American publishers. The agency approved the copy and submitted it to the publishers. The advertisement soon appeared broadcast, and the agency received word from the publishers that it had excited so superb a response from the public in the matter of sales that the identical copy would be repeated for an indefinite period. A raise in salary did not lessen Krimmie's disgust. But he resolved to stick this time. Dorothy and he were earning a decent income, and until they could establish them-

selves independently of jobs, must deaden every other immediate concern.

Suddenly, a new calamity threatened them. Krimmie received a third card from the conscription board advising him, without explanation, he had been promoted from 5B to 1A. Before he was able to act on this quixotic intelligence and investigate the causes and effects, a great day arrived—the day which those who frantically revelled in unanimously pronounced the most joyous in the history of civilization. The Armistice had been declared. A deafening roaring and whistling, accompanied by what looked like the heaviest snowstorm in memory, burst over New York. The anachronistic flurry proved to be nothing more than the now famous tearing of hundreds of thousands of papers into bits that flew and floated and descended from the outstretched hands of people hanging from the windows of office buildings. Every office in town shut down impulsively, and thousands of people poured out onto the streets. Strangers embraced one another; hysteria rent the air; love ran loose and untrammelled; and for one day, at least, hatred was stamped underfoot and forgotten. And illusion reigned as it had never reigned before.

A few days after the Armistice, on a Saturday afternoon, Dorothy and Krimmie stole off to Connecticut and were married by a justice of the peace. Since he was not permitted to re-marry in his native state, Krimmie had established a residence in the bucolic little state bordering New York on the east, and thither they had gone, accompanied by a new and devoted pair of friends, Lola Ridge, the Australian poet and now one of the editors of Others, and her husband, David Lawson, an electrician from Wales. Lola and Davy acted as witnesses, and after the brief, lively ceremony, returned to New York with the silently happy couple.

The home into which Dorothy and Krimmie moved was a small, furnished apartment on Irving Place. The landlady, a

temperamental Irish woman, looked upon them with a degree of suspicion, due no doubt to the curious circumstance that the wife, as well as the husband, was never at home during the day. It was not according to the conventions. The conventions were disturbed again when one of the young people, without warning, might have been found at a desk all day—not in an office, but near one of the windows of the apartment. It should have been the other way round—the wife at home and the husband in the office. But it was Krimmie who had lost his job.

Despite his success with respect to the horsemen of Señor Ibañez, Krimmie's later effort at the advertising agency had been viewed as a further trial. Writing ads for a novel was one thing, writing ads for Mr. Edison another. The Edison account was the most important on the books of the agency and the agency was in danger of losing it unless someone could be found to take the place of the one copy-writer who had always been able to say the right word in the right place about Mr. Edison's phonograph and say it a wee bit differently without deviating from the truthful spirit of former ads. The one man who had mastered these subtleties had been called to some training camp a few months before Krimmie's entrance on the scene. Several adventurous copy-writers had come to grief with the Edisonian requirements, and so far, each ad the present incumbent submitted had been rejected at headquarters. It was a desperate situation for the agency, as well as for Krimmie, and he crammed down the writings of the master copyist until he had almost memorized their intricacies of speech. The two features of the phonograph on which he had to play all the variations of reticent praise, saying something new in an old way, or something old in a new, maddened him with their elusiveness. They were worse than the worst chess problem he had ever solved in the past, and unless he could come to more intimate grips with them, they would soon turn their sphinx-like faces to some copy-writer and agency with a

fuller comprehension of their priceless originality. Very fortunately, the dilemma was quickly solved and the account saved—but not by Krimmie. The same Armistice which had spared him from service spared the famous copyist from further service at the training camp. The expert returned to the office on Union Square, and Krimmie was politely and regretfully informed, after being introduced to his forerunner and successor, that his services were no longer required. The copyist said something complimentary about a book he had been reading called Mushrooms—and Krimmie gravely thanked him.

And so, he sat at the same oblong table that had accompanied him from domicile to domicile since the days of 232, and sent out hordes of letters of application to other advertising agencies. In between, he sent letters to friends and to strangers, in communities west of the Hudson, in an endeavor to enlist their interest in a prospective road tour for Dorothy and himself. He had received no responses from advertising agencies, and only an occasional acceptance from the hinterland. But he was confident that further acceptances would accumulate within the next few weeks. Chicago had already been heard from—and the city by the lake usually inspired the rest of the country out there. Dorothy's position downtown was safe—safer than ever. When she told Mr. Krauss she had married, he congratulated her, and when she told him who the man was, he congratulated her doubly and added: "We will never lose you here."

But Krimmie had other ideas. So had Dorothy. He expressed the conviction that the sudden loss of his job would metamorphose into a compensation which would eventually set Dorothy free, not alone from Mr. Krauss, but from every other employer henceforth. Then she could pursue her life as an independent individual—a life every energy in both of them craved for her. They would have to give up the snug haven

in Irving Place fairly soon—but what of that? Did they not have a home in each other, no matter how the roof overhead was shaped or the address underfoot was named?

One evening, he looked out through the curtains of the window and watched for her, as usual. She was quite a little late, and he most impatient to tell her something. When she came and looked up at the window, they waved to each other. She seemed rather tired. When they greeted each other in the room—she with that hopeful glance of hers and he with a smile he tried to conceal—she quickly suspected something must have happened. That day's mail had brought quite a number of requests for engagements—each at a fabulous figure. Dorothy buried her head in his shoulder, and he murmured, "We'll show them some day, won't we?" She could only press him closer. . . .

IV

MILESTONES

OTHERS, the magazine, now in its third year and reduced to intermittent appearances, was virtually through. Thanks to various contributors who believed the project ought to continue, a desire half-heartedly shared by its founder, these sporadic issues were collated somehow. The tedious responsibilities of editing still another number were assumed by some one person or a small board of editors. They brought new ideas into the paper and instilled it with variations of the spontaneity under whose impulse the older issues had been presented. Among the editors who served pro-tem or gathered in an associate capacity, Williams, Saphier, Bodenheim, Helen Hoyt, Orrick Johns, Lola Ridge and Dorothy officiated. Toward the tail-end, when Krimmie was positive the venture had outlived its usefulness, Lola managed to keep it going a while. Williams, who had soured on the movement to a degree that caused him to pounce on an issue he edited with a grieving, ranting, coroner's inquest he called Belly Music, assured his readers, "Others is dead," and promised to bury it with the present issue. The *post-mortem* on the part of Lola, with her happy mania for appearing among moribund things and reviving them, puzzled the subscribers. Here was still another number on top of one they had been asked to accept as an obituary. How many times was the thing to die and bob up again?

The frailest of humans physically and the poorest financially, not even Lola and the flame that carried her about could fan any life into Others—and so she resigned it. But in those final days, she kept the movement going by giving a party

nearly every time she sold a poem or an article, though editors sent her sums hardly ample enough to be converted into the refreshments gracing her dark room on Fifteenth Street. At these parties, all kinds of people encountered one another, newcomers mingling with old-comers in an association of likes and unlikes. The constant going and coming gave Krimmie the private consolation, if he needed one, that the contact of artists, accepted or ostracized by the world outdoors, would continue—regardless of whether he was concerned in the movement or not.

At one of the parties, a memorable affair Lola gave in an effort to put further forces in motion, Krimmie's belief that a definite milestone had been laid with its forerunners was not only substantiated, but he could feel the approach of greater and profounder portents working their passionate way up from the soil. The party itself was innocent of such hypotheses, and Krimmie unconscious of the actual drift of his thoughts in a logical sequence. But he met so many guests of different æsthetic denominations, some of them frankly opposed to one another, that he wondered whether the next step in American affairs might not be a transmutation of the subjective into the objective. Various members of the defunct magazine were present, and he hugged the serene faith that each had emerged from a chaotic era onto feet recognizable as belonging to individuals who had done and would do their own walking. Others had not fostered a group—he, at least, had always avoided such a connotation—but it had served as a starting point wherein these folk might express themselves independently of one another. They needed such a medium no longer, and it was for this reason, rather than his weariness with the demands of continuing to publish the paper, that Krimmie concluded Others had had its day and must stop.

Some of the older members hob-nobbed about Lola's room with some of the newer: Evelyn Scott, a green-eyed person

with a satiric languor; Emanuel Carnevali, a young Italian with a tempestuous vocabulary that promised to usher new cadences into American poetry; Donald Evans, the prince of Fifth Avenue, with his "haunting hands" and the "fingers that are unforgettable." Then there was Witter Bynner, who had signified his interest in Others and kindred movements by starting the Spectric School with Arthur Davison Ficke and Marjorie Allen Seiffert, a travesty which not only derided these movements and was accepted by Others in an issue devoted to "Emanuel Morgan," "Anne Knish" and "Elijah Hay," but served to introduce the best poetry Bynner had ever composed. And Waldo Frank, one of the moving spirits of the now defunct Seven Arts, with a lyrical, testamental quality of speech permeated with a new mysticism and prophecy. And Percy Mackaye, bashful, affectionate, and not a little awed by the proceedings, a feeling he transferred to propaganda in behalf of some of the people he listened to. And, entering the room late in the evening, Scofield Thayer, who had recently bought out The Dial from Martyn Johnson, in order to convert that paper from the position it had assumed as a radical political organ into a magazine to be devoted to the modern arts. The first issue had not yet appeared, but rumor had it, *"auf Flügeln des Gesanges,"* that America was at last to receive the magazine it had been waiting for. Thayer enjoyed the mystery shadowing his patrician step, the more so as many artists who had been waiting for the millennium to arrive looked upon him with an expectant eye.

Reading aloud was soon in order. Even Stevens was inspired to try something, but Wallace waited for conversation to reach a fairly confused height before he drew forth a paper that looked like a poem but sounded like a tête-à-tête with himself. Orrick Johns, Krimmie, Williams and the rest took their turn and finally Marianne Moore joined them. About two in the morning, she read something one could barely hear about

"England with its baby rivers and little towns," "Italy with its equal shores," "Greece with its goats and its gourds," "the far East with its snails, its emotional shorthand and jade cockroaches," "and America . . . where there are no proof-readers, no silkworms, no digressions; the wild man's land . . . in which letters are written . . . in plain American which cats and dogs can read!" Then the hopeful rise to the other view—"The flower and fruit of all that noted superiority—should one not have stumbled upon it in America, must one imagine that it is not there? It has never been confined to one locality." A beautiful poem few of the guests could hear distinctly, but which the mystery man from The Dial heard so well, he stole over to her and, after a whispered consultation, induced her to part with it. Marianne was the first of "the old guard" to be accepted by the new magazine.

Toward the close of the party, Donald Evans leaned forward a little and with a low, suave accent, intoned the precise and beautifully modelled phrases of a sonnet—the form no American has ever surpassed him in. It was clearly a self-portrait. Some of those present chafed under the restraint put upon them by being forced to listen to the beat of a traditional metre, but those who loved poetry for its own sake followed Donald reverently—

"Born with a monocle he stares at life,
And sends his soul on pensive promenades;
He pays a high price for discarded gods,
And then regilds them to renew their strife. . . .

Features are fixtures when the face is fled,
And we are left the husks of tarnished hair;
But he is one who lusts uncomforted
To kiss the naked phrase quite unaware."

It was the last time one heard the aristocrat read aloud, and the last time one said "good-night" in parting. Not many days later, Donald was found dead in his room—and rumor reported that his own hand had concerned itself with the end. . . .

At another affair Lola gave, Krimmie met Edwin Arlington Robinson for the first time. This super-shy, owl-like, never-to-be-drawn-into-dialogue man threw his interlocutor into so much embarrassment that he could only fall into a reciprocal speech confined to terse questions and answers. Except for the remarkable lustre of his dark eyes, E. A. wore the innocent expression of a lonely child and only the occasional appearance of a quick dimple on each side of the mask he wore betrayed he was listening to the voices around him. Assuredly, if a man was ever weary of the turbulence of life and the superficial velocity of every-day contacts, and sought the cool recesses of an island or a cave, he could hardly have done better than call on Robinson in his monastic room on the top floor of a house on Eighth Street. Shortly after the meeting at Lola's, Krimmie tried such an expedition toward the sky, and came down feeling decidedly refreshed—though the older and younger man never got beyond or tried to get beyond an intercourse in monosyllables. The caller came away with the quiet sensation that the man in the wilderness in the days when few folk read poetry was as much a hermit now that he had been substantially recognized, and cantankerous new movements surrounded him—led by the controversial hordes who espoused or attacked free verse. The owl sat in the midst of the light of a new day with the same expressionless air with which he had greeted former manifestations. Krimmie departed with the melancholy impression that somewhere behind the mask, E. A. was certain that the future would consign everybody, not excluding himself, to forgetfulness—except for a poem or two some curious commentator might come across in stray, old an-

thologies, eye for a moment and resign once more to the dust. Robinson, with his steady glance at the perspectives of time and space, was a stimulating contact for a man in the midst of modern experiment. It tended to place a beneficent restraint on his incorrigible enthusiasm for individuals and to see them and himself in the growing detachment of a greater self-criticism and a cooler and more circumspect regard for history itself. . . .

Another new contact came to Krimmie in the roundabout fashion of a series of causes and effects apparently unrelated. Back in the days at Grantwood, one of the earliest unknowns to send poems to Others was Marjorie Allen Seiffert of Moline, Illinois. This handsome person undertook periodic journeys to New York and at one of Lola's parties, to which Krimmie introduced her, Marjorie brought a cousin from down Massachusetts way, Marion Sheffeld, a novelist in embryo. At still another affair, Krimmie met still another lady from Massachusetts, the Welsh poet and playwright, Jeannette Marks. It happened that Miss Marks, a highly independent being, was conducting poetry classes at Mt. Holyoke College, and in the course of widening the outlook of the students, had invited various poets, regardless of ismism, to address them. Miss Marks insisted that Krimmie make the jaunt to Mt. Holyoke, and he accepted. Marion Sheffeld heard about his coming and tried to arrange for an additional recital in the neighborhood—Smith College being but a few miles from Mt. Holyoke. Despite the beautiful reception accorded to him at Mt. Holyoke, a sensation he was never to forget, the authorities at Smith could not be induced to give him a trial there. However, Krimmie accepted an invitation from Mrs. Sheffeld to spend a day in Northampton, and, in the course of a charming party, learned that still another institution lay in the neighborhood: Amherst

College, the one-time home of Emily Dickinson and the present residence of Robert Frost.

He insisted on being driven straight to Amherst, without the slightest forewarning to the author of North Of Boston, whom he had never met and with whom he hadn't even corresponded. Marion Sheffeld led Krimmie into her car, and urged on by her excited guest, broke several records *en route.* After many questions put to pedestrians, who confessed they had never heard of Mr. Frost, a farmer directed the wayfarers to an obscure cottage just out of town. Mrs. Frost, who graciously received them at the door, directed them to a tennis court where they would find "Robert" in a desperate engagement with his eldest son. Krimmie stole up behind the man whose work he admired as much as that of anyone writing English at the time, and with a preliminary, "Pardon me for disturbing you, sir," introduced his hostess and himself. "Holy Smoke," returned Mr. Frost, dropping his racket, grabbing Krimmie by the arm and leading the way back to the cottage.

For something like eight or nine hours, Robert and Krimmie gossiped without interruption. Marion Sheffeld had to depart without her guest, leaving him to the tender mercies of his new hosts. But there was no such mercy in Robert. He wanted to know everything about everybody and Krimmie was so completely captivated that he talked as he had never talked before. To his astonishment, he learned that Robert had been reading various issues of Others to his classes, "just to keep the boys alive to new doings," and that Lima Beans had been one of the exhibits. Krimmie regaled his host with affectionate portraits of Williams, Bodenheim, Marianne Moore, Stevens and others. In the midst of the general excitement, Robert, with a far-away expression Krimmie soon learned was habitual with the New Englander, asked: "I wonder do you feel as badly as I do when some other fellow does a good piece of work?" Krimmie nodded with pleasure, and Robert added:

"But let anyone attack such a man and I'm up in arms for him."

At two or three in the morning, the gossips were still at it, and had to be shooed off to bed, but at seven, Robert knocked at Krimmie's door, dragged him off to breakfast and they started all over again. The two men parted on a note of intimacy which no circumstance has ever altered. Many a time later on, when Krimmie learned that someone had been saying things behind his back—fine things in quarters that benefited him—he discovered that the instigator of these subtle attentions was the man he had disturbed in his lair down east. He rarely heard from the hermit—except through such indirect channels. . . .

V

PUPPET PEOPLE

The swift coming into his consciousness of further individuals, older or younger than himself, continued to broaden the range of Krimmie's faith and gave him constantly varied evidences of the great change permeating the land and of still greater promise along the horizon. In the same inexplicable fashion that poets had risen out of the soil and turned the stones, arid plains and stunted people of their immediate environment into nourishing lyrics, ballads, and philosophies, the novelist, the playwright, the essayist and even the critic had arrived and contributed his own groping version of the scene in a compelling prose and dialogue in many instances akin to the speech of poetry. There were now also quite a few young publishers and young publications devoting their energies, whether practical or spiritual or both, to the competent housing and exploitation of the men and women and movements expressive of the time—and in rare instances, beyond the time. Visionary fellows like Huebsch, Liveright, Knopf, Seltzer, Harcourt, Brace and Howe, with a lot of excellent sense in their veins, were performing an artistic and comparatively lucrative service in bringing writers and their public together; and The Dial, The Little Review, Poetry, The New Republic, The Nation, The Freeman, with others bruited about as due fairly soon to join them, accomplished the unusual feat of publishing literature on the one hand and paying for it on the other, thus keeping their contributors as well as themselves alive. In reviewing the ground, Krimmie therefore committed himself to cheerful reflections over the natural demise of Others, and except for one more effort, in the form of a swan song, re-

signed the idea to whatever posterity might think of it—if anything. This farewell was simply the collection of one more Others anthology—the third and last—and still another publisher, Donald Evans' friend, Nicholas L. Brown, undertook the burden of printing and distributing it. While the volume was not as adventurous as the first two, many of the original contributors having arrived at a state of quasi recognition, further novelty was achieved through the first appearance of older and more established poets like Lindsay and Frost, side by side with lesser knowns and unknowns, new even to Others.

With the publication of the valedictory, Krimmie felt the time had come for a retirement from the field of co-operative effort and the setting forth on concentrated ways of exclusiveness. His own work and the problems he and Dorothy shared demanded their entire interest. So did the roads and by-ways of that hinterland people had begun to lump together and deride as Main Street. It was still one of the paradoxical elements in his nature that, whereas most American-born artists looked to and, in so many cases, hurried to and settled in New York for their moral and financial background, Krimmie persisted in directing his eye and need elsewhere. Out of his stray contact with the Middle West and Far West, he was confident that the hospitality he had enjoyed would stretch to a means of subsistence for Dorothy and himself just so long as they required it through those particular channels. And out of his knowledge of the responsiveness attending the perpetual jaunts of a fellow as mad as Vachel Lindsay, for one, a vision had arisen of an era, even in dollar-ridden America, not unrelated to the troubadour era of the Middle Ages in Europe. A man would then carry the instrument of his expression from place to place, instead of from court to court, and meet with a courtesy, child-like, eager and genuine enough to lay the foundations of communities potent enough to twine a receptive traditional chain in and out of which the workings of the

creative spirit might play as they pleased. Now and then, he stood off and eyed the picture, smiled at it, called it a Messianic delusion, only to return, none the less, to the factors that had attracted him at first hand. Crude, ignorant and inarticulate though he knew most of the communities to be, he had found enough signs on that tour to force him to take up his improvisation once more. Encouraged by further offers from the West, he and Dorothy went on with the preparations for their jaunt across country together. To this end, much to Mr. Krauss' bewilderment, Dorothy had resigned her position.

They would require a lot of engagements at fairly respectable fees to pay their double expenses both ways, and avoid being left high and dry in some outlandish place far from home. The pair pursued their undertaking with an abandonment of immediate cares that caused most of their friends to consider their preliminaries preposterous and without foundation in fact. Here, without the actual funds to pay their combined way to California, they were planning a trip both ways. It was suicidal, their friends remonstrated. The pair were even talking about trying a trip to Europe at the conclusion of the American tour. Neither had ever been over there, and it would be glorious to be doing it together. Then their friends touched their foreheads in earnest.

They had added a new feature to their prospective program: a small troupe of puppets Dorothy was to manipulate while Krimmie read the lines of his plays. In his latest peregrinations, he had discovered a diminutive Italian who was giving performances of old plays like the Orlando Furioso in a tiny theatre with puppets of his own designing. In the ensuing negotiations, Remo Buffano suggested that Dorothy and Krimmie, with his assistance, should give a public performance of Lima Beans in the studio of a friend of his. Krimmie was to chant some poems, play the mandolute and then read the play back-stage while Remo and Dorothy manipulated the

husband and wife. Out of this embryonic performance, the tourists derived the salient features of future programs. Unfortunately, though only a small admission was charged at the door and a copy of Poem-Mimes was given away as a souvenir to each patron, less than a dozen people entered the studio. If Americans in New York failed to attend a puppet show, what was to be expected of Americans in the back-woods? However, a novel compensation overshadowed this material consideration: the gift of a set of dolls and a collapsible toy-theatre on Remo's part in exchange for the performance, the books and any publicity accruing to him through the use of the dolls on the road.

There was bound to be one stubborn difficulty at each performance. Notwithstanding her skill with the puppets, a picture so captivating that Krimmie had the impression music itself had grown corporeal as the puppets danced at the ends of her fingers, Dorothy was chronically and hopelessly in terror of appearing in public. Luckily, a compromise was effected through the traditional exigencies of puppetry itself. She could take her station behind the theatre long before the play began and come out of hiding long after the curtains closed and most of the audience had departed. Nobody was aware, except through hearsay or an insistent statement of Krimmie's, that Dorothy had been in the house at all. When the curtains of the toy theatre parted in response to applause at the end of a play, only the puppets appeared and took their bows. But even in this, they nodded from her fingertips. No wooden actors ever played with greater assurance than the dolls on the hands of a black-haired girl no human being could equal in shyness.

Meanwhile, there were folk who declared this new phase was as quixotic as their other preparations. Or who hinted that Krimmie was approaching his second childhood. But somewhere inside himself he knew he was not growing down

to puppets, but up to them. He had an affectionate recollection of his own paper outfit in childhood, but realized the present step was not a return to those days, but a recognition of certain symbols that lie between puppetry and mankind. He felt that, in those moments of detachment coming to people who reflect on their actions, one sees oneself as an infinitesimal individual in an environment of time and space in which the proportionate part one plays is so insignificant as to appear grotesquely tragi-comic. Starting with such an admission, one was assuredly an appropriate instrument for puppets to serve with fidelity. They are given a share in artificial time and space embryonic of the life allotted to people by the familiar fate directing the strings that keep them in motion. People see and guess a great deal more than puppets are able to; otherwise, they are equally helpless, and out of this mutual helplessness comes that curious bond that lifts a man into an actor or a doll into an animated reproduction. There was another reason he had attached himself to puppets. They were never a tedious people. When one was through with them, one put them away, and took them out only when one needed them again. It was more than one could say for human beings.

Krimmie talked and gesticulated so earnestly as he expressed these ideas that his friends were sure he had lost his sense of humor. He was just as positive he had regained it. Or found it for the first time. . . .

VI

TOURING MAIN STREET

At the outset of their tour to California, Dorothy and Krimmie placed themselves under no material obligation to the past, except by purchasing two railroad tickets to their first stop, Chicago, and taking along a small sum as an immediate emergency fund. The troupe of Merry Andrews, seven or eight puppets asking for no more room in a suit-case than their heads, costumes and feet required; the collapsible theatre, high and broad enough when set up to hide the two nomads from view and flat enough when folded to slip into a crate; and the mandolute Krimmie had received from Franklin Hopkins; these were shoved under one of the Pullman seats. The theatre had been dedicated, The Mushroom Theatre. The scenery and props and the costumes for the guignols had been designed and executed by Dorothy. Without a dissenting vote, she had been appointed manager of The Mushroom and all its concerns. She presided over her department with a conscientiousness bred of an inner joy loosed in freedom, and as the Pennsylvania Limited flew westward, her eyes vied with the passing landscape in a pantomime of excitement.

At the La Salle Street depot, someone was waiting to escort the company to his home on the South Side—Mitchell Dawson, a red-headed poet at heart and a red-headed lawyer by avocation. Not long before, Mitchell had aided Billy Saphier in the foundation of an experiment called The Others Lecture Bureau, with The Little Theatre as the meeting ground for the poets and their audience. After the machinist departed for New York, a place he now lauded above his once adored "Chi," Mitchell, assisted by two attractive, capable young women,

Marion Strobel and "Gyp" Taylor, had vigorously managed to assemble audiences that crowded the seats, lined the walls and sat on the stage of the theatre. Four poets had addressed these gatherings in rotation, Lola Ridge, Conrad Aiken, Krimmie and Bill Williams, and the success of the idea caused Mitchell to become the manager of the first tour undertaken by Carl Sandburg. The lively salamander played host to the visiting New Yorkers during their stay in town, and his fine old home not far from the University of Chicago was the base of operations for a fortnight ahead.

Their first performance, or rather Krimmie's—since the building was not equipped for a puppet theatre—took place down a dark alley, inside a crooked, rickety shanty, on the uncertain floor of a club composed almost entirely of laborers under the expert direction of a wall-paper hanger, Mr. Jack Jones. This club, which calls itself The Dill Pickle, issues a magazine and runs a little theatre, assembles whenever Jack Jones can find someone "who thinks he has something to say and would like to say it." The night Krimmie appeared, the hall was so crowded with men and women who had paid the entrance fee of "half a dollar a head," he had to offer the musical section of his program from the top of an upright piano. As it was essential that he sit down to the mandolute, he had to climb to the perch and make the best of his embarrassed eminence. In such high surroundings, he felt like a truck-driver plucking the strings of an instrument instead of the reins of a horse. Not inappropriately, he opened with a lyric about a ragamuffin reduced to impecuniosity, but happy because of the delicious mood possessing him. In answer to the cadence on which the lyric closed—"What can you do that I'm so happy without a sou?"—Burton Rascoe, who had undertaken the protean rôle of door-keeper and treasurer, turned over to Dorothy, Krimmie's business representative, the contents of the old bowler in which the boyish literary editor

had been collecting the admission fees. The total amounted to the staggering figure of one whole railroad fare to California. The performance itself, including that part of the festivities playfully known as "heckling the speaker," lasted the inordinate length of three hours. Krimmie had to be dragged home by Dorothy and Mitchell, only to be dragged out on the following night for another recital, "by request," on which occasion, Padraic Colum, the genial Irish poet and playwright, acted as chairman. A second fare to California was tossed into Burton's bowler.

The proceeds on both occasions, minus the nominal expenses of the club, had been devoted to "the entertainer." During the blessed intermission, sixty to seventy copies of his privately printed Poem-Mimes were sold by the fantastic anarchist, Ben Reitman, a masterful behemoth who carried a veritable tower of volumes on each arm and hawked the wares after the fashion of a Coney Island barker: "Now, friends—when you return to the bosom of the family, and the wife demands how and where you spent the evening—you won't be able to tell her how dull and harmless it was unless you take her one of these books to prove it." Scarcely had the mastodon concluded his attack on the speaker, when the heckling began. This traditional duty of undermining and upsetting the gentleman was the most rabid and incredible number on the program. Krimmie delighted in it and tried to send back blow for blow. The while he stood up, ducking or answering questions, he was gratefully learning that the profession of poetry is a thing of the streets and not of the study. Otherwise it could not have found its feet again after the muddy onslaughts, many of them "below the belt," made by these uproarious gamins innocently clamoring for the life of their guest, and turning and rending one another with deep-bellied laughter if the victim happened to light on an agile retort. In the midst of one of the noisiest skirmishes, a distinguished

Englishman, visiting these shores for the first time, and sidling into the audience along with other intellectuals who loved "to do the slums," decided to ask a patronizing question. Rising to his full dignity, he drawled pontifically: "Would the speaker mind elucidating for the benefit of the company just what might be the curious source of his inspiration?" The speaker could only reply: "God, of course."

Another heckler, obviously one of those unconscious humorists who abound in rhetorical solemnity, forced his way to the front, pounded the rostrum and cried out: "I'm sure we all enjoyed our friend of the evening—it's plain as can be he meant well—but permit me to say he never once sounded the tocsin or rang the bell in the belfry." He was shoved aside by a noble-looking spellbinder, a thick-set German who was trying to master English, and who boomed: "I have no such objection to our friend. The man has promise and not a little execution. But I do object that he uses the English language instead of the German. English is so ugly. Take the great Shakespeare himself. He sounds so much better in German he should have written in German. Take for instance how ugly that line sounds—Hark, hark the lark! Now listen to how soft it sounds in German: *Horch, horch die Lerch!*"

Chicago being a democratic community, the tourists were invited to render recitals for a woman's club, one of the student fraternities of the university, a group of lawyers—who also love to cross-examine speakers and end by attacking one another—and for several organizations on the outskirts of the city. Certain members of the faculty did not precisely approve of a gentleman who was guilty of the occasional writing of free verse, so the students had to hire a hall of their own, to which, however, in a sporting spirit, they invited the censors. A few drifted in as mildly as the first snowfall. Krimmie was keenly interested to learn from this experience that undergraduates, not alone here but elsewhere, were champion-

ing contemporary American writers through the formation of literary fraternities. The most important development of the independent action of the Chicago group had found expression in annual anthologies devoted to the work of the respective members. With such co-eds as a nucleus, there was naught to fear from the interference of the faculty or the curriculum. Several professors soon joined the poetry group, evincing a desire, strange indeed in view of most educational traditions, to stand shoulder to shoulder with the younger men and women in facing the creative problems of the day. The man who held the particular admiration and fellowship of the students was Professor Robert Morss Lovett—now on the staff of The New Republic. And among the poetry group, the member who has since made the most impressive name for himself is the exquisite author of The Apple Of The Eye, Glenway Wescott.

In approaching the lawyers who had invited the nomads to appear before them, Krimmie might have fortified his defences by memorizing Sandburg's "Why does a hearse horse snicker, dragging away a lawyer's bones?" But he had met the ringleaders of the group, Mr. Oscar Blumenthal and the brothers Bachrach, and discovered they basked outside Carl's category. They were lawyers only a part of the day. The mid-day luncheon was an elastic session stretching two or three hours over a table groaning with hospitality and hedonism in a glorious den named Metzger's. Here, after the aromatic panatellas had been ignited and the bones rolled double sixes or less to ascertain which unlucky hand had to foot the whole bill—did these men discuss deeds, tracts, corporation fees? Emphatically not. Someone would refer to the latest novel, play or biography—which all of the members had read—and the innocent remark precipitated a long, heated debate in which no man agreed with another. These pagans also met one evening every week and occasionally asked some layman to

address them, the while they sat back in the combined posture of judges, jury, lawyers and spectators. It was in front of such a formidable unit the tourists were invited to perform.

The newspapers were not far behind the various groups in welcoming them. There was scarcely a day when some article, editorial or good-natured hoax did not appear. The favorite object for parody was the mandolute, and Krimmie was accused, publicly and privately, of having invented the thing. The firm of Lyon and Healy, manufacturers and dealers in musical instruments, seized upon this publicity and set forth a riotous show-window display of mandolutes. Amused by the unprecedented spectacle, Krimmie called at the store and, to his amazement, was presented with one of them in recognition of professional services. Bookstores, almost without exception, displayed his once rejected Poem-Mimes in prominent places, as though he were a visiting English novelist. And among the few magazines in town, a wall-paper periodical asked for some of his poems and a paper called Cartoons had to have something.

After the Dill Pickle evenings, a Miss Wambaugh, head of the English classes of the high school in Evanston, arranged to have Krimmie come to that flourishing town and address the student body. There was no guarantee the affair would reimburse him, but this spirited woman, determined to have some of the young people listen to him, decided to charge an admission fee and transfer the proceeds to the speaker. It was an arrangement he heartily concurred in, since the hospitality of any given place was ever a sufficient inducement to start him going there. The outcome surprised even Miss Wambaugh: several hundred students came in at the door. . . . One fortuitous invitation usually leading to another, a lady in the audience introduced herself as Mrs. A. Starr Best, chairman of The Drama League of America and, as Krimmie learned later, the *deus ex machina* of the organization. It

happened that Zoe Akins, who was scheduled to speak in The Woman's Club of Evanston—Mrs. Best's headquarters—was too ill to appear. About an hour before schedule, he received a hurry call from Evanston asking whether he and Dorothy and the puppets could fill the bill instead. A car was placed at their disposal and rolled the troupe at top speed to the auditorium. They gave their respective numbers, packed up and raced back to Chicago—where another performance was due in the evening. The next morning, Mrs. Best consulted the thespians with a view of undertaking a short tour under the auspices of the Drama League in centres southwest of Chicago, and the impresario readily agreed to lead the company anywhere the company might be welcome. These new dates were fitted into the general itinerary. The conviviality Dorothy and he met with everywhere had affected Krimmie physically. Despite their strenuous activity, he gained, rather than lost, weight. Sherwood Anderson, quick to note the contrast between the present and the past, twitted him about "looking like a showman," and doubtless the phrase described him accurately.

Before the engagements in and around Chicago were concluded, requests had come from other places: Cleveland, through Raymond O'Neill, wanted to put on a bill of five of Krimmie's plays; St. Louis, through Orrick Johns, had similar designs on a bill of three; while Milwaukee and Madison, through Laura Sherry and Mrs. Joseph Jastrow, urged the troupe to visit Wisconsin. Smaller communities in Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska asked whether they could be included in the tourists' wanderings; somebody in Rochester invited them to come back there, and even an organization in New York inquired: "When are you coming home?" The troupe only turned on its tracks for the week in Cleveland, a dazzling week in which plays of Krimmie's were produced he had never seen before. An obsolete church had been converted by that in-

trepid dreamer, Raymond O'Neill, into what is now known as The Cleveland Playhouse, and there a troupe of devoted amateurs gave the tourists an unforgettable thrill. Two of the plays O'Neill tried out were plays for dancers Krimmie had intended solely for the imagination, and Raymond proved to him they were practicable on the boards.

It was an experience which encouraged the dramatist in his belief that, no matter how much longer one might have to wait for home-town theatres to open their doors to experimenters, there were enough communities out in the wilds to help them test their problems. The Cleveland and St. Louis adventures were the first of a series emphasizing his feeling for the smaller cities and towns confirmed Manhattan Islanders loved to dub derisively by the general title attached to a recent novel by Sinclair Lewis. Krimmie was by no means blind to the faults of the many Main Streets he visited. As he came to them, he learned to search for their finer and more hopeful aspects, and to drop or tolerate everything else for the sake of these. He took the more optimistic signs as a sufficient omen of a future state, patiently reducing the faults to a growing minimum. The ugliness, ignorance, backwardness, Puritanism, lack-lustre materialism of many places troubled him only temporarily. He was willing to risk any act or speech, however fantastic, in behalf of the provinces. He had met evidences, and they sufficed to send him into dreamland. . . .

VII

THE TOUR CONTINUED

In Milwaukee, another courteous city, the tourists performed for the Wisconsin Players; while in Madison, the seat of the university, they gave a public performance under the auspices of a woman's club. At Krimmie's suggestion, an experiment was added to the program at Madison. Two talented students in the art of pantomime rehearsed a group of the tone-poems with him. In the evening, the stage was given over to the mimes while the troubadour sat outside the scene and recited simple dialogues accompanied by harmonic rhythms. A colloquy between the earth and a flower, another between two daisies, a third between two owls, and a group of solos, were intelligently interpreted by the mimes and responsively followed by the audience. Originally, he had tried out this problem with two dancers at home—Margaret Swain and Harmon Cheshire—in a private performance for which Helen Freeman had donated the now extinct Nine o'Clock Theatre.

The next invitation had come from Kansas, whither the nomads went to perform three times in one day for the State Agricultural College at Manhattan: at chapel for the assembled student body, in the afternoon for the English classes, in the evening for the faculty. Nelson Antrim Crawford, the poet and a member of the faculty, had been the instigator of the triple proceedings, and every member of the board, beginning and ending with Dr. Jardine, the irrepressible president, vied with Crawford in the tireless kindness to which the guests were subjected. To Krimmie's relief, there was no request for Lima Beans, since the students, as Crawford advised him, heard nothing, saw nothing and read nothing but agriculture

the year round. At the close of a day that had almost grown never-ending, the tourists, weary in every limb, but happy in every vein, retired. Another community had been added to their increasing affection for strange places. A curious encounter, on the way to Manhattan, served to heighten their future memories of the place.

In the smoking compartment of the flying rattler, Krimmie was accosted by a magnificent, blue-eyed farmer, fully twice his own dimensions physically and twice his depth vocally: "Where might you be from, Stranger?"

"New York——" not without the hesitation of a little embarrassment.

"What you doing out in our country? Going through?"

"No, stopping off——"

"Glad to hear it, Stranger. And where might you be getting off?"

"At Manhattan——"

"Mighty glad to hear it, sir. I've got two sons studying there and getting the education I never had as a boy. You going there to study?"

With rising reluctance— "I'm sorry—I wish I were—but I'm going there to talk——"

"To lecture, sir?"

"Something like it——"

"And what might your subject be?"

"I can't say exactly" (Krimmie didn't dare say poetry)—"one might call it writing——"

"Well, well! So you've come all this way to give my boys penmanship? I do hope you'll teach them the right slant!" . . . .

The next engagement called for a two-day run across the illimitable prairies and up over the sculptured conflagration of the Rockies on the yearning, straining coaches of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. They reached the Great Divide,

over eleven thousand feet in the air, in the throes of a huge, dark blizzard. Dorothy and Krimmie peered out, silently watched the majestic ballet and listened to the winds, hooting like Indians. In Salt Lake, that superb city, with the widest of thoroughfares in America, they alighted and encountered the same blizzard, waving its arms and recklessly kalsomining skies, mountains and earth with undulating snow.

The committee of the club which had invited them to town quickly installed them in the snug home of Dr. and Mrs. McHugh, and there they thawed out thoroughly. Presently, they learned that William Butler Yeats and Witter Bynner had just left the city and Vachel Lindsay and Padraic Colum were due the following week. The news lifted them into a magic humor. The last time they had talked to these four minstrels had been in Chicago, and here they were crossing one another two thousand miles away from the thoroughfares of the East. The nomads were nearly convinced they were moving about in a sphere of phantasmagoria, instead of the tangible world of facts they had elected to pursue. That the country was sufficiently starved for an intimate contact with artists to send for them across great distances added proof to Krimmie's conviction that a new régime had come into dynamic being. He returned to the vision of troubadours passing from court to court and bringing these centres into eventual communication with a more universal ideal.

An untoward incident almost marred the recital in Salt Lake. The blizzard blew out the electric currents of the city, and the auditorium in which the players were huddled was thrust into indigo. The breath of the Rocky monster had likewise extinguished the eight tiny footlights of The Mushroom Theatre. Light was provided in a moment, sputtering and dripping from the slender tips of toy candles. The puppets held themselves in nonchalant readiness and then went through their

paces with the responsiveness for which wooden and wire actors are dependable, regardless of the moods of nature or of man.

In California, the demands the troupe endeavored to accommodate came from women's clubs, private organizations, the University of California, a group of public schools in Berkeley, and the Denishawn and the Norma Gould Dancers. On his former trip to the coast, Krimmie had tried to interest Maud Allan in his ideas for dancing to poetry and, after chanting and playing to her, was invited to develop them in England, whither she was bound for a series of engagements. England sounded pretty far under the conditions of the time, and Krimmie most reluctantly declined. Finding himself in Los Angeles again, he decided to call on Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn and outline his experiment to them. Miss Ruth was particularly hospitable to the plan, and one afternoon he journeyed out to their country home on the outskirts of town. She was so pleased with the impromptu program that she insisted on trying out one of the numbers, and without further ado, got up and grotesquely waddled through the rôle of an elderly duck the while Krimmie delivered the folk-like words and music. The audience—composed of Denishawn Dancers—revelled in Miss Ruth's performance, and before the afternoon closed, Krimmie was engaged to undertake a bill of dances and pantomimes with some of the members, under the direction of Ted Shawn.

So remarkably sensitive were these young girls to the slightest æsthetic design and so thoroughly trained in the traditions of interpretative dancing, that Ted Shawn only had to attend an occasional rehearsal. In order to disclose a variety of dramatic dynamics, Krimmie added the static play, Manikin And Minikin, and the puppets, playing from the hands of Dorothy. Rehearsals proceeded daily for five or six weeks, and along with the earth and the flower, the owls and the daisies that he had introduced at Madison, a bird, a tree and a

stream, a willow, a sprite and a shadow, a juggler of balloons and stars and other dancing things were incorporated. At times, only the head or fingertips were alive, as it seemed when the daisies or the willow turned to mimes; or the feathers, when the owls indulged their debate; or the muscles of the back—in the case of the stream.

A cordial audience attended. In response to a request for a second program, Krimmie consulted the head of still another studio—that fine artist, Norma Gould. Here, he met an older group than the one at Denishawn. Miss Gould took part in the recital and directed the work of her talented associates, the Misses Wilton, Wardell and Lyndall. The program was repeated in the woman's club of the home of the moving picture, Hollywood.

At the university, under the auspices of Mr. Sam Hume and the Greek Theatre, the puppets played to their biggest audience. Curiosity filled Wheeler Hall, the largest auditorium on the campus, to capacity, and the diminutive imps mimicked humanity so faithfully that Sam Hume came up to the Mushroom Theatre, went back stage, held a hurried consultation with the management and then announced a second program. The microscopic antics of the guignols, none of whom was more than fifteen inches high and all of whom were confined to a stage barely four feet wide, carried to the rear benches of an auditorium seating approximately a thousand people. A friendly English gentleman, Gerald Hillyer, had built a more commodious theatre for so august an occasion, and several papier mâché actors were added to the troupe: the Mesdames Jones, Smith, Brown, Snub, Meek and Weeds, ladies of the east-side tenements in a play called Monday, A Lame Minuet. This new play, Lima Beans and Jack's House, comprised the second program. A request for a third had to be gratefully and wearily declined. It would have required new plays, thespians, scenery and rehearsals; and as a puppet production

needs practically as much preparation as a production with human actors, the element of time interfered with an acceptance.

A number of children had attended the performances in Wheeler Hall, and so large-eyed was their interest that the Berkeley department of education engaged the troupe to entertain a chain of public and private schools. The original children grew to dozens and the dozens to hundreds who paid the tiny admission fee—a sum no larger than one paid at the movies—and they obviously preferred the dolls. Ideas and impulses which escaped grown-ups rarely escaped the youngsters. Mrs. Lima, for example, is not always sure of her hold on the bowl into which she strings the string beans. She is liable to drop it, and the floor of the stage being narrow, the bowl invariably rolls off into the auditorium. Grown-ups always stare and do nothing about such a catastrophe, whereas youngsters can be depended upon to scramble after the bowl. The one who is lucky enough to find it and hand it back to Mrs. Lima, leaning over the footlights and frantically gesticulating, receives a grateful bow from that lady as she grasps it and goes on with the play.

The puppets never tired; the children never tired; but the beings who manipulated and spoke for the dolls grew so arm-weary and throat-weary that a vacation had to be stolen. Moreover, the trip homeward had been scheduled in advance. The last afternoon in California was devoted to a trip out to the Golden Gate; and there they sat, watching the sun slowly and placidly dip its bronze wheel into the waters of the Pacific, the while an old-fashioned sail, inside the disk, looked like a ghostly spirit drifting to the Orient. They had a longing to be on board and visit Japan, China, India. But, having promised to call at various Main Street communities back in the Middle West and the East—places that might help them across the Atlantic some day—they said *au revoir* to the sail, the

sunset and the sea, and returned to San Francisco. The next morning, brimming over with memories of a California Krimmie had scorned on a former occasion, the nomads boarded the Santa Fé and started homeward.

The return trip lasted about six weeks. Stops were made in Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Chicago. In Missouri, in a denominational college for girls, a bann against dancing, nearly a hundred years old, was lifted after the president and some of the trustees had observed three of the students improvising a program of pantomimes with the mandolute. In Grinnell, Iowa, the small college in the prairies took in so much in excess of the guarantee to the tourists, that a little theatre was founded as an experimental laboratory for students interested in writing and producing their own plays. The night the troupe arrived, twenty-four hours ahead of the performance, only three tickets had been sold, and the instigator of the visit, an ex-clergyman named Dr. Bridge, looked as dubious as a German philosopher as he apologized: "To think of your coming so great a distance to greet such a situation!" The following evening, while Dorothy and Krimmie were busy setting up the theatre, Dr. Bridge rushed up to them with the news that the house had been sold out and the treasurer was selling standing room. He rambled on in an effort to account for the phenomenon: "We live on a prairie here that might as well be the desert so far as modern happenings are concerned. Year in, year out, we see nothing we haven't seen before, and our only contact with the world we love comes in the format of books. We read most of you fellows out here, but see none of you. If you isolate people long enough, they'll even seek art for entertainment. . . ."

On the eve of their return to New York, they stopped off at a small Jersey town in the Palisades, not far from Grantwood. They could see the skyscrapers across the Hudson pointing their noses high and acting as an unconscious background for

the *dramatis personæ* of a final, quaint legend. They were greeted at the station by the minister of the town, a ruddy, robust individual who recalled the farmer Krimmie had encountered in Kansas. He turned even ruddier as he announced: "I hope you won't mind that you're not the whole show this evening. I'm afraid my little flock would be unable to sit through an entire performance of poetry. You see, we have these evenings every Saturday, and the whole town comes to church. But I can only get folk to do so by giving them as much variety as possible. Our ladies enjoy singing. So we have a tenor and baritone from New York to sing ballads for them tonight. But if we had nothing but ballads, our men would grow restless. So we have a couple of police sergeants from New York to show them this Japanese importation called jiu-jitsu. I hope you won't mind following the wrestlers?"

"Not at all," Krimmie assured him.

"After you're through, there'll be a movie for the youngsters —Charlie Chaplin in The Kid."

"And what sort of—poetry—would you have us give them?"

"Start with something easy. And they'll follow you."

After the performance, the troupe boarded a ferry boat and returned to their native city. . . .

VIII

BROOM

Dorothy and Krimmie rented an apartment on West Fourth Street, added an alley kitten to the establishment and settled down for a while. They had started for Chicago nine months before with two railroad tickets and a little over, and here they were with expenses accounted for and a fund against the future. It was nothing to brag about in the face of American fortunes in oil, coal and real estate, but it would take care of the pair for some time to come. They might have considered sailing to Europe for a short trip had they not needed the relaxation their exertions along Main Street now entitled them to. Dorothy had a piano and Krimmie a study. Though they had formed the habit of living so close together that they invariably used the same workroom, the latest arrangement was not retrogressive. They could keep the door open between the two rooms and be assured of an approximate proximity. They had not arrived at the state of satiety requiring a distance apart, or even the illusion of one, across which they might safely yearn for each other. One might have supposed the inventions of Johann Sebastian or the intermezzi of Johannes Brahms must have disturbed the workings in the study. Or that this everlasting reading aloud of every scrap of paper must pall on the listener occasionally and interfere with her work. But their two years together had not yet shown them the dangers they courted so recklessly. . . .

A month or so after their return, while they were still in the process of settling, a series of coincidences brought about another new move. Krimmie's favorite haunt was now the Sun-

wise Turn Bookshop in the Yale-Princeton building. The shop, of several years' good standing in the town, had been founded by two lovers of books, Madge Jenison and Mary Mowbray Clarke. In the course of developments, poetry evenings had been inaugurated, and Krimmie was one of the poets invited to render a recital. Madge Jenison, who had originated the idea and eventually wrote a book on the romance of the place and its denizens, retired from the Sunwise after disposing of her interest to a young man from Princeton, Harold A. Loeb. The boyish Harold showed a keen interest in Krimmie's recital, and a succession of friendly meetings ensued. As a result, the Sunwise, which issued occasional books under its own imprint, published a volume of Krimmie's latest plays, Plays For Merry Andrews, with a de luxe as well as a regular edition. Soon after this publication, Harold had another scheme to propose: the foundation of an artistic periodical.

Being an admirer of Krimmie's former activities as an editor, he questioned him about the practical possibilities of such a venture and the scope and character thereof in the now advanced state of the country. Not in the least desirous of connecting himself with still another magazine, Krimmie was decidedly backward, but so persistent was Harold and so impulsive his demands that the latter began to commit himself before he was aware of the trend of his growing interest. Harold had not only arrived at definite proposals of financing the venture, but promised him a fairly free hand in editing it at a salary to be determined later. Contributors were likewise to be paid a nominal fee for their work. Further intimacies followed, and Harold was invited to share the apartment on West Fourth Street. Here, the young Princetonian had additional opportunities of pressing his suit for the magazine, and Krimmie, after resigning himself to the inevitable, quickly developed his own latent enthusiasm for new ventures. The two men agreed on an international magazine of the arts with the

main stress on the younger Americans. This appeal had carried away Krimmie's final scruples and once more loosed his propagandistic energies. Dorothy was appointed secretary. After many conferences, the title, Broom, was selected. People got the impression this must be Krimmie's title, but Harold had hit upon it. The manifesto Krimmie composed was immediately printed and circulated. It confined itself to a quiet statement of facts, the most surprising of which was the announcement that Broom would be published in Italy.

Hardly had the manifesto appeared when The Dial—now the leading æsthetic periodical of the soil—commented upon it in a jocular editorial that helped to boom Broom considerably. Seizing on a line in a volume of Improvisations by Bill Williams, that the best thing which could happen to American letters would be the donation of a hundred thousand dollars to the ex-editor of Others, The Dial announced, "Somebody's gone and done it!" Then followed the playful allusion: "Shall august Lima Beans rightfully inherit the Colosseum boards? Shall beans rather than Christians be there now podded?" The victim enjoyed the Rabelaisian satire, but encountered endless scepticism around town when he stated that the sum invested in Broom fell far below Bill's hopeful dream and The Dial's hilarious advertisement. But the hoax also had its beneficent effects. Subscribers who had lost confidence in Krimmie's wayward movements returned to the fold, and artists who were not in the habit of being paid for their work, called on the co-editors. Some of these Krimmie had met before; others came for the first time.

Manuel Komroff, with the drooping mustaches, the wide, gentle eyes of a Mongolian and the beautifully simple art of a primitive; Ernest Boyd, brown-eyed, brown-haired, brown-bearded, brown-clothed and brown-shod, with a flow of speech redolent of Dublin and, as Yeats claimed for his countrymen, of Homer himself; Gaston Lachaise, the sculptor, Joseph

Stella, the painter, Hendrik van Loon, the historian, each with a faith in the America of his adoption and a belief that the country of his birth, France, Italy, Holland, was now effete and exhausted. And those two men who represented criticism at its highest, Van Wyck Brooks and Paul Rosenfeld, the one delving into the American past, the other into the present; healthy, uncompromising fellows who touched the future from opposite sides, Van Wyck, hypercritical, historical, English, stark in his honesty; Paul, generous, sensitive, Oriental, many-sided in his honesty; and both men constantly meeting somewhere in the dream of the new soil. They were the two profoundest critical influences in Krimmie's life, the one from the rear, the other from the front, giving him many an unconscious hand of guidance. Then there were the usual unknowns, who, he would say to himself, are always with us, and without whom no society can be assured of a continuous future. Fellows, in the present instance, like Jean Toomer, Frederick Booth, Kenneth Burke, Isidor Schneider, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos, and The Dial's arch-discovery, E. E. Cummings.

Meanwhile, in the many conferences to which they subjected each other, Harold and Krimmie had talked about Europe as the continent from which to publish their venture and, through a gradual process of elimination, Italy was decided upon as their headquarters. In his renewed peregrinations after manuscripts, Krimmie met a man he had known in the early days of the Liberal Club, Arthur Livingston—now an active member of the Foreign Press Service. He was advised to invite Guiseppe Prezzolini, the editor of La Voce, the picturesque organ of modern Italy, to become an associate in Broom. Prezzolini accepted the Italian editorship and extended the hospitality of his offices in the Trinitá dei Monti, overlooking St. Peter's and half of Rome, to the adventurers from America.

Personally, what excited Krimmie particularly was the thought that a splendid opportunity to introduce lesser known Americans to European circles lay just ahead. Recent Euro-

pean periodicals, drifting into the New York harbor, already gave evidences of a rapidly growing interest in the new country. Among the many articles, he was not overlooked, and the experience fascinated him the more because of the insight into his work expressed by critics totally strange to him heretofore. Translations on a fairly large and discriminate scale were appearing in older, as well as younger periodicals, and among them Krimmie found three of his plays and some of his poems in French. The other way round, Broom would be in a position to introduce the younger authors and artists of Europe to America. Still another consideration for going abroad was equally vital. Italy was famous for its paper and typography and for the much greater inexpensiveness of production in general. For two or three months in advance Harold and Krimmie prepared for the trip, collecting manuscripts and drawings, writing letters, placing publicity campaigns, soliciting subscriptions, seeing people, talking and gossiping.

In a tumult, Dorothy and Krimmie completed their personal preparations. French and Italian lexicons had been studied and French and Italian cafés visited in an effort to master at least the rudiments of those languages. One other person joined the three travellers as an assistant secretary: Frances Midner, the then popular "Raggedy Ann" of The Washington Square Bookshop and the present proprietress of The Sign Of The Unicorn. Harold Loeb, an absent-minded mortal on more than one occasion, almost missed the steamer on which they were scheduled to sail: the broad, stout, easy-going Rotterdam. He had forgotten his Custom House papers, but thanks to a succession of flying taxis, managed the trip from Hoboken to Bowling Green and return in time to catch the gangplank, rush aboard and present his duplicate papers. Later, he made the discovery that the originals had been carefully tucked away at the bottom of one of his suitcases in the hold, and Krimmie congratulated him on his artistic temperamentality. . . .

IX

AMERICA IN EUROPE

HARDLY had the four Americans settled in Paris when romance attacked them from the pages of the hotel register in the rue Jacob. Krimmie was signing for Dorothy and himself when his eye was caught by two familiar names on the opposite page, Sherwood Anderson and Paul Rosenfeld. Hastily summoning his elementary French, he asked the clerk where he might find his fellow Americans and was informed they had left for London the day before. This was a grievous disappointment, but it proved one was certain to meet many friends in Paris. Ever since the days of the Armistice, Americans were hurrying back to Europe, or coming over for the first time, as in the case of Sherwood at forty-five and Krimmie at thirty-seven. It seemed a belated hour for a maiden trip to the continent—with most of the countries smashed into exhaustion and depression. But Krimmie consoled himself with the reflection: better to be coming over after rather than before one has crystallized as an artist. Formerly, Americans rushed abroad during the formative period of life and returned to the states with influences, however benign, which submerged their independence ever after. Most of the composers, painters and writers of the previous generation had become diluted Germans, Frenchmen or Britishers as a result of the yearly exodus to European ports and the prostration of the body and spirit at European shrines. He began to see America more clearly in this, his first experience with perspectives, and to realize that his job, such as it was or might grow to, would be concerned for the most part with the indigenous expression of this or that creative ego struggling to free itself and its background from

the shackles of inhibition. A number of crude, powerful forces had emerged from the soil across the Atlantic, and he saw them as so many skyscrapers trying to brush the heavens and lifting the consciousness of the race, however slow, timid or sceptical, to a forthright future in which love, life and beauty might at last have room for something to record.

He would have given a good deal to have eyed Sherwood walking Parisian boulevards under the highly sensitized guidance of Paul Rosenfeld. But there were to be various compensations before he left Paris for Italy. Man Ray, who had come over at the invitation of some of the Dadaists, seemed quite at home in Paris after the welcome he received as the American branch of Dada. The Junoesque Djuna Barnes, author of A Book, registered at the Hotel Jacob and beholding the members of Broom in the lobby, cried out, "So this is Paris!" Meanwhile, Krimmie had written to an old friend who had settled in France once more, Kitty Cannéll, alias Rihani, and Kitty, a Frenchwoman even to the perfect accent she had acquired on former visits, put herself at the service of the newcomers and introduced them to a number of artistic circles. Other old friends were in town, Albert Gleizes and Marcel Duchamp, whom he met on their own territory and through whom he was introduced to leaders of the latest movements: The *enfant terrible* of the boulevards, Jean Cocteau, no longer an enfant, though he looked it, and terrible indeed, though he didn't look it; Valéry Larbaud, the most cosmopolitan of Frenchmen; Francis Picabia, the founder of 292.

Krimmie's French was a severe handicap. He must have seemed queer to these Parisians, since every foreigner spoke French of a sort and few Frenchmen ever descended to another language. However, he was treated courteously, especially over the chessboard, that international battlefield. Chess had been introduced to the Cocteau circle by Duchamp, who had virtually resigned painting for Caïssa with that gesture of weari-

ness characteristic of the group. When Krimmie met him in New York, Marcel was a diverting performer, full of surprise attacks and eccentric combinations. As he took the game more seriously, studied books, joined the Marshall Chess Club, played in tournaments and rose to the status of a first-class player, his originality vanished. Now that he was back among his fellows, tomfoolery, under the influence of Dada, had attacked him. The group only tolerated illegal moves in their play and even indulged the German *Kriegspiel* in an effort to break with all science and solemnity. Marcel's game was in ruins, and he confided to Krimmie—"Why did I ever leave New York?" No one talked art in the group; it was simply not done. Vaudeville, the latest Argentine tango, American jazz, skyscrapers, machinery, advertising methods—these were the new gods here.

One morning, a dapper little man with a friendly air called on Krimmie and introduced himself as Tristan Tzara, the daddy of Dada. Tzara spoke excellent German, and so he and his host conversed in that neutral tongue—mindful of Gallic ears in the vicinity. Tzara wanted Krimmie to meet some of the other Dadaists at the Café Michaud, not far from the Hotel Jacob, and to enlist the interest of Broom in these playboys. The Roumanian and publicist of the group never missed an opportunity of extending the operations of his associates and had established branch depots in most of the countries of the continent. Since Harold and Krimmie had determined on an international tone, regardless of ism or ismism, they were hospitable to the work of some of the Dadaists—notably the stories of the aristocratic globe-trotter, Paul Morand, the most talented of its members. One noon at Michaud's, the favorite haunt of so many French artists, Tzara led Krimmie to a quiet galaxy of young men and women who did not look like conspirators against the peace of the world. He took a particular fancy to Philippe Soupault because that charming Parisian

regaled him with the admiration he felt toward various contributors to Others. Later in the day, Tzara deposited with Krimmie a pile of documents appertaining to Dada—magazines, pamphlets, programs, posters and manifestoes in every language, dead or alive, and over these Harold and Krimmie pored with increasing bewilderment.

Léon Bazalgette, the translator and biographer of Whitman and friend of many things American, with whom Harold had entered into correspondence, was a courteous, cultivated Frenchman of an older school. He had approached some of his own contemporaries in behalf of Broom—Paul Claudel, Paul Fort, Jacques Rivière, André Gide and other gods of La Nouvelle Revue Française—and, despite howls of derision from the Dada camp, the new editors added these negotiations to those already under way. In Michaud's, where one seemed to meet everybody in time, Krimmie took his courage in hand and accepted an invitation to be introduced to the papa of modern French music, Erik Satie. Satie, looking like a gentle Gallic edition of Bernard Shaw, came to Michaud's every evening, usually accompanied by Georges Braque, the most accomplished of Picasso's disciples, and André Derain, the foremost of Cézanne's descendants, a magnificent figure of a man who wore a tremendous black sombrero which he removed with the majestic sweep of a cowboy in a wild-western movie. Krimmie had been appointed by Edgar Varèse, the founder of the International Composers' Guild in New York, to approach Satie, and other European composers with whom he might come into contact, in the matter of soliciting manuscripts for the guild. Though he found the Gallic Shavian a man of the utmost graciousness and one who sympathized with his linguistic deficiency to the extent of employing the slow, distinct monosyllables of a French primer in responding to questions, Krimmie had no luck with the Santa Claus of the Groupe des Six. He was grateful for the old man's descent to the speech

of a child, and recognized in the act something of the sophisticated naïveté of his contribution to music. No youngster in Paris could compete with Satie in joyous buffooneries, and he was nationally revered by composers of every denomination.

Through the friendly offices of Kitty Cannéll, Krimmie met Brancusi, a sculptor whose work he loved above all living sculptors. He expected to encounter some tall Roumanian god, the father, brother or son of the great Doina herself, standing in the midst of granite and alabaster mountains and perpetually luring smooth figures into the ovals his hands were famous for. The actual sculptor he saw in his workshop was small and slight, with a slender beard that started from his lively, penetrating eyes and extended half-way down his body. The while the sculptor gossiped with Kitty and allowed his glance to admire her boyish figure, he caressed the egg-shaped head of his latest offspring. One got the impression the egg had been shaped from the marble through thousands of these reiterated pressures. Brancusi's French was almost as atrocious as Krimmie's and their respective accents made it impossible for them to converse. The sculptor contributed to Broom copiously and gratuitously, but when he learned that his young rival, Jacques Lipschitz, had also been asked to contribute, wrote a peremptory letter to Harold demanding the return of his reproductions. Lipschitz, a remarkable Pole who had likewise settled in Paris, returned the compliment to the Roumanian. This was the first of a number of European controversies the coeditors were confronted with. Kitty managed the *contretemps* with sufficient diplomacy to win both sculptors back to Broom. It was a performance entitling the erstwhile Rihani to a position at any court in Europe.

Krimmie had written to Ezra Pound for an immediate meeting somewhere, and, in a characteristic scrawl, Ezra invited him to come to the Café des deux Magots for luncheon. Krimmie looked forward to the encounter with an indescribable

mixture of qualms and thrills. They had been corresponding for the past six or seven years, and now he was to see the distinguished expatriate for the first time. When he approached the café, he found two ladies sitting at an outdoor table. The younger of the two arose, introduced herself as Mrs. Pound and then introduced Krimmie to her mother—Mrs. Shakespear. He was greeted with the information that "Ezra's gone across the street for some cigarettes"—and nervously went out on the boulevard in search of him. He saw an athletic figure in velveteens, wide-open collar and flowing tie coming across from the other side. More Parisian than the Parisians, with a shock of yellow hair tossed by the wind, and no hat on top of the hair—this must be Ezra. Laying the crook of his cane on the pavement, Krimmie essayed two or three preliminary golf strokes and shouted, "Fore." Ezra approached, eyed him in amazement and then, with a jerk of the head, stuck out his hand and said, "This must be Others." Leading the way back to the table, Ezra motioned him to a chair, and opened an instantaneous tirade on Broom.

Krimmie entered upon familiar territory at once. Ezra hated all things American and resented the coming of two of his countrymen on a mission concerning which he had not been consulted in advance. "Who's to be who on your magazine?" Krimmie, knowing Ezra's dictatorial policy by hearsay and experience, laid a list of typewritten names on the table, and Pound pulled out a pencil and blue-penciled line after line, usually with some cutting remark, until only a few were left on the page. Then he drew up a short, sharp list of his own, representing the men for whom he was now carrying the banner —Gaudier Brzeska, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Jean Cocteau. Ezra was the Parisian correspondent of The Dial and could not volunteer any active service to Broom. He was loyal to any undertaking he was connected with, and his feeling for Scofield Thayer, frankly enthusiastic. Krimmie's

first meeting with Ezra came to a fairly amicable close, though Pound continually referred to the co-editors as "you Americans." There was never any doubt as to his contempt for the land of his birth. Nor for the land of his recent adoption—England. France was his country now, and Krimmie had a melancholy inkling not even France would last with him, that possibly Italy or Spain would call to him next. He seemed ill at ease, even in Paris, although he had been accepted by many of the younger Parisians. By temperament, this fine, lyric poet belonged to a romantic era like the trouvère days of the Middle Ages. A victim of the illusion of places, he turned on each town as the illusion wore away and betrayed the many spotted faults of a commonplace surface. He was constantly escaping somewhere in an effort to find himself. And yet, there was no better refuge for finding himself than in Ezra Pound. Krimmie could not understand why he bothered about so many issues foreign to the main one and employed his splendid energies in skirmishes with people and things he knew to be inferior.

One of the oldest members of the American colony, Gertrude Stein, asked Krimmie to call at her handsome, monastic domicile in the rue de Fleurus. In a room tastefully hung with early Picassos, including a portrait of herself, and excellent examples of some of the younger artists, Miss Stein greeted him cordially. He was impressed with the fine head, simple manners and masculine intelligence of his hostess, and readily realized why the room he wandered about in had become the magnet of leading continental artists. Veiling the title of his juvenile effort, he recalled to her the simultaneous publication of their first books by the Grafton Press, hastened to apprise her of his regard for Three Lives and found to his surprise his praise meant a good deal to her. This was to be accounted for presently by the evidence that Miss Stein, outside the circles in which she moved and a few devotees at home, had had virtually no recognition, while quantities of her imitators,

Dadas among them, were being graced with refreshing bouquets. Pulling open a row of ponderous drawers in a cabinet, she disclosed a pile of huge manuscripts she had been working on for years, none of which had ever been published in book form and only slight portions of which had been accepted by magazines. The sight and the information stunned him, and he carried home two of the volumes for a discussion with Harold. His partner could make nothing of them, and only after repeated debates, agreed on the publication of one small narrative, to be issued in short, serial doses.

Another haunt he visited was the bookshop known as Shakespeare and Co., run by a progressive individual from the American wilds, Miss Sylvia Beach. There he learned that Shakespeare and Co. were undertaking the book publication of James Joyce's monumental Ulysses, instalments of which had appeared in The Little Review, several of which had been suppressed and confiscated by the indefatigable moralist, Mr. Sumner. Miss Beach told him Joyce was suffering with an affliction of the eyes that confined him to his room. Robert McAlmon, who suddenly loomed up in the shop, promised to escort him there. This young Californian aviator had joined Bill Williams, shortly after the demise of Others, in the founding of a paper called Contact, first published in Rutherford and now housed in Paris. One afternoon, Bob called for Krimmie with the assurance that Joyce was feeling well enough to receive him. Courteous though he was to Krimmie's quest for a future contribution, the Dubliner was so tired and the room in which the three men sat so dark and melancholy that the only distinguishable feature was his gently ironical voice. Krimmie nodded to Bob, and the two visitors left, with a friendly invitation to call again.

Parisians and Americans in Paris expressed their scepticism toward a magazine which chose Italy instead of Paris for its headquarters. But the partners were not to be lured from the

policy under which they had set sail. The factor that finally strengthened this resolution was the expensive rate of living in the French capital. It affected Dorothy and Krimmie especially. Contrary to exaggerated reports as to Krimmie's ascent to prosperity, the gossip having gathered in response to the economic tribute in The Dial, his drawing account on Broom was barely equivalent to a bookkeeper's. To this income he added by sending sporadic European articles contracted for by American periodicals. Still, the rate of living in Paris was, for one who did not know Paris, higher than the rate at home. French landlords, restaurants, taxis and shopkeepers were after the wealth Americans had made out of the war, and as there was, unhappily, no exception to the rule, Krimmie was treated like a millionaire and disliked accordingly. The materialistic note of the average Parisian was somewhat similar to the one he thought he had left behind. He tried to account for it on the ground that France was tragically depleted and debilitated.

The French artist was the French artist of yore; art still stood high above every mundane consideration; it was the great *idée fixe* of this deathless, dauntless spirit. These men were courteous to the newcomers from overseas and many of them declared, in no indefinite terms, that the art of the morrow must come from the States. Walt Whitman was a demigod in Paris, and a number of contemporary American writers and painters were being hailed as they had never been hailed before and receiving for the first time the benefits of a sophisticated criticism. It was not a little pathetic to see how hungrily the Americans craved and reacted to such analyses. Even the Mercure de France, one of the oldest and most conservative of periodicals, devoted a department to the younger Americans, due primarily to the pioneer effort of a French critic, Jean Catel. He had visited the States, fallen under the spell of the new poetry and now beat a monthly drum resounding through the austere columns of the old periodical. It was nothing short of an astonishing sensation to a man in Krimmie's position,

ostracized from the academic papers at home, to find himself tunefully translated and intelligently weighed by this young stranger. Catel had recently written him to come to the University of Montpellier, in the south of France, to attend the *première* of his play, Manikin And Minikin. Krimmie had to send a melancholy note of declination.

The excited editors of Broom were anxious to get down to the actual publication of the first issue. They had been in correspondence with Milan, as well as with Rome, because the former was the manufacturing centre of Italy. It was planned that Dorothy and Krimmie should go on ahead, stop off at Milan and investigate living and printing conditions there, the while Harold continued to collect material in Paris and awaited the result of their researches. After two serene days in Lausanne on the Lake of Geneva, a half-way stopover, Dorothy and Krimmie crossed the Alps, rode through the eternal tunnels digging their way out of Switzerland into Italy, found themselves on the border, Domodossola, began to drop their few words of French and pick up their few words of Italian, and, not many hours later, alighted at Milan—the one-time home of Leonardo da Vinci and the present home of F. T. Marinetti, the Futurist. Milan being in the grip of one of its innumerable and interminable festas, the tourists were unable to procure a room anywhere. They drove back to the railroad station and tried a town only an hour to the north—Como on the heavenly Lago di Como. This served as a base of operations.

The very first night of their stay in a purely Italian *pensione,* the Sempione, they were awakened by guitars and the voices of serenaders. They were indeed in Italy—and Krimmie felt like quoting passages from the *Reisebilder* of Heine and Goethe. But what the voices sang—as it transpired—was not some native folk-song, but the latest imported fox-trot, otherwise known as The Pelican. There was no escaping New York in Europe. . . .

X

THE ETERNAL PAST

MILAN proving inadequate to the hope of the co-editors as a literary centre, and too expensive in the department of printing, the move on to Rome originally planned was undertaken, and there, in the capital of catholicism and among the remains of the empire, the curious experiment from the young country overseas was inaugurated. Giuseppe Prezzolini showed his fitness for the Italian associate editorship and was indispensable in the delicate matter of consulting native printers and obtaining estimates at the lira, instead of the dollar rate. A contract was signed with one of the oldest printers in Rome, and Fabriano papers (the kind Walter Arensberg had once sighed for) were selected as the only appropriate material for the sumptuous magazine—which was to contain reproductions of paintings, sculpture and drawings in addition to poetry and prose. It soon appeared that the publishers would be able to issue a magazine in format and texture such as had never been approached at home, and at less than one-fourth the cost of a similar venture in New York. The offices in one of the old palazzi in the Trinità dei Monti, rooms which Harold had rented of a princess of the royal family, overlooked the Villa Borghese, the gardens of the Pincio, St. Peter's and half of Rome. At the foot of the broad stone stairway leading from the Trinità to the noble Piazza di Spagna, stood a house in one of whose small rooms John Keats had died about a century before.

From the broad balcony of the whilom palace, the editors and their guests took tea of an afternoon, and gazed out over the ancient world with eyes considerably chastened by the vista and the thought of memories gone by. In the autumn of 1921, the first issue of Broom appeared; several thousand copies were shipped to the New York office and smaller lots to agencies

in London, Paris and Berlin. The contents and physical beauty of the paper were received with delight everywhere, but nowhere more forcibly than at home. Steamers brought letters of congratulation, manuscripts, drawings and subscriptions from the most remote places. European writers and artists clamored for admittance. Yone Noguchi sent some poems all the way from Tokyo. One man mailed a subscription from Bombay. Even London post-marks were to be found on envelopes and packages. Broom had arrived. The second issue was already at the printer's, and the third and fourth in the process of make-up.

The offices in the palace became the headquarters of a number of artists from other countries. The few American writers in Rome quickly looked upon Broom as a consular haven. One of the first to stride straight in was the long-legged, red-headed author of Main Street, Sinclair Lewis. The novel was then at the zenith of its popularity, and no one was more flabbergasted at its reception than the man from Minnesota. He had come to Rome with the air of a bewildered conqueror, and finding Krimmie in his path, walked up to him with the unexpected query: "Hello, what do you mean by attacking Main Street?"

It devolved that Lewis had read about an address Krimmie had delivered at The Dutch Treat Club in New York just before his departure for Europe. The topic of his talk for this famous group of journalists had been, The Sunny Side Of Main Street. Krimmie assured the novelist the speech had been a defence of Main Street itself and not an attack on the book. Lewis could not be convinced that anything good could come from such a street, and the two men, the one from a remote small town, the other from the metropolis of American cities, argued from positions that had become comically juxtaposed. The novelist was a more accomplished dialectician than the poet and delivered himself with so much speed and gusto that the latter resigned the argument—as he usually did anyhow—and parted with the skyrocket on comparatively friendly terms. Lewis had descended on Rome to start a new novel, eventually

to be known as Babbitt, and rented a magnificent suite in that most luxurious of hotels, the De Russie. It was a strange *dénouement* in view of the Minnesotan's confession that when he sat down to Main Street he had done so supported by the residue of his earnings from The Saturday Evening Post and had expected to spend these savings on the time required for composing a devastating denunciation of America and its most characteristic offspring, the small town. His publishers had agreed that if the book went through one small edition it would be doing remarkably well. Something uncanny had happened to the American reading public. Trained and cajoled into perusing and clinging to happy endings and sweetly optimistic accounts of itself, one might have inferred that only the radicals would have touched the thing. But most of these fire-eaters rejected it, while some two hundred thousand copies had passed into the outstretched hands of the inhabitants of Main Street itself.

Another American who visited the offices was Edna St. Vincent Millay. She was also undertaking her first tour of Europe, but was already determined to leave Rome as soon as possible. "The ghosts of the emperors have chilled my bones," she said in her most tragic tone. Edna looked paler and more delicate than ever. Like so many other Americans, she had come abroad on capital limited to one's earnings in the literary world and had been forced to accept the more primitive conditions of the continent. Dorothy and Krimmie had no difficulty in sympathizing with her. They, too, had found Rome wellnigh insufferable. All the old houses were built of stone, inside as well as outside, and the walls and floors of the *pensione* in which they lived, just off the Via Tritone, were unbearably damp and penetrating as the winter approached. As Romans themselves were accustomed to such climatic conditions from the beginning of European time, little or no attempt was made toward heating the houses. Edna, as soon as she gathered enough strength to escape from her ghosts, fled to Vienna for comfort.

Except for its relics and recollections, Rome was a keen disappointment to Krimmie. Coming from a youthful country with a youthful heart of his own, it was difficult for him to keep turning his eyes to the rear. He felt the deepest admiration and awe in the presence of the eternal past, and it gave him indubitable landmarks for studying the present in a superb perspective. At the same time, the future tugged at him most of all, a period that had to be served if one intended to go on living. For this aspect of life, Romans seemed to have not the slightest predilection. The new movements in Italy, particularly the one in music, led by the impresario of the younger composers, Alfredo Casella, had received the most grudging support in the ancient capital, a centre devoted to the saccharine operas of Maestro Puccini and their mediocre productions in the glorious auditorium of the Costanzi. Through Prezzolini, Krimmie met Casella and heard him play some of his cerebral compositions on the piano. He was glad to learn that the leader of the neo-Italians was scheduled to sail for America in the spring and gave him letters to Edgar Varèse and others who might place themselves at his command. While he preferred the music of Pizetti, Malipiero and Respighi, Krimmie had the utmost respect for a propagandist, and in discussing the prospective trip with Casella, a talk they attempted in a hodge-podge of broken Italian, French and German, it was a pleasure to hear that the distinguished nationalist intended to conduct and play the work of his contemporaries first of all.

Dorothy and Krimmie were present at the return to the Roman stage, after an absence of two decades, of Eleanora Duse. The play selected for this gala occasion was Ibsen's Lady From The Sea. It would be hard to lay the right finger on the circumstance or group of mischances that disenchanted the two foreigners. The largest theatre in Rome, the Costanzi, an auditorium almost the size of the Metropolitan, seemed to be the place for housing an event of such national and inter-

national significance. The audience was truly an amazing one, composed of distinguished members of the church, military and civic governments, ambassadors from all over the earth, and royalty itself, led by the King and Queen of Italy; not to mention a laity of artists who had come to pay their simple homage. It was an assemblage united in the anticipation of seeing and hearing once more the pre-eminent actress of the continental theatre. Somehow, Krimmie dreaded the performance itself. From what he had heard and read about Duse he had an idea that an actress so intimate in all the nuances of the stage would require a small theatre for the expression of her spiritual genius. And from what he knew of The Lady From The Sea, that gray, lyrical interpretation of the longing of a shut-in woman for the waters of her birth, he feared that this most delicate of Ibsen's plays would be lost in the vast spaces of the Costanzi. His premonitions were partly fulfilled when the curtain arose and the members of the company raced through the opening lines. The fine, grave dialogue, taken at such a *tempo,* sounded preposterous and alien to the norm of the Norwegian master. Duse's entrance was the signal for a superhuman ovation. For fully half an hour the theatre resounded with the hysterical acclamation of her worshippers. It was a tribute reflecting as much praise on the audience as on this most Italian of artists, and Krimmie, no less than any native in the hall, joined in the recurring tumult. A tempest of flowers had been hurled or carried from all parts of the auditorium—and the applause from every wall and crevice reverberated like the sea in a cave. With the return of the play itself, Krimmie's terror revived. The famous face, the hands, the poise, the gestures, even the "golden" voice—were lost in the Costanzi. The company surrounding Duse was atrocious throughout, and in his love of the theatre, he stubbornly refused to see a classic reduced to the pastime of providing a vehicle for a star alone. He felt entirely out of place in the audience, and could only mutter, better a fair ensemble

of actors than one immortal mime and a crowd of incompetent subordinates. He was careful not to breathe this aloud. He would have been thrown to the lions. Doubtless deservedly.

At the other extreme, in a much smaller theatre, Dorothy and Krimmie beheld the antics of Marinetti and his playfellows and the audience greeting the performers with missiles and anathema. The little pieces the famous Futurist and his band performed in the style of a variety show might have provided great fun had they not been composed of the utmost drivel and relied upon slapstick methods so shopworn as to be provocative of contempt. Marinetti himself, introducing each act with a short speech, was captivating, in so far as he refused to budge from his post no matter how many vegetables were thrown at his head. He maintained an imperturbable courtesy composed of an incorruptible gentleness, and was as nimble as a hard-headed coon in a Coney Island booth in tilting his head just out of harm's way, the while he proceeded with his comments. But the audience refused to listen to Marinetti. An uproar of songs, in which one part of the house vied with another, drowned every speech and interrupted every act, and when these groups wearied of driving the thespians off the boards, curses and vegetables were hurled from balcony to balcony. Later, Prezzolini informed Krimmie that the civil warfare had been prompted by Marinetti in the subtle behalf of publicity—that he always hired a number of desperados to open the attack on the stage and rouse the audience to an emulative activity. The game was amusing at the start, but amusing no longer, now that one understood the submarine processes.

In a still smaller theatre, another disappointment came after a performance by the renowned troupe of marionettes playing at the Teatro dei Piccoli under the guidance of that charming impresario, Signor Podrecca. This troupe, like Alfredo Casella, was scheduled to visit America, and Dorothy and Krimmie were anxious to see them in action. But the company of actors and dancers, scores upon scores in number, was so natural in its

appearance and demeanor, no room was left for the imagination of the beholder to improvise. Instead of creating an art of their own, unified throughout, these puppets merely succeeded in imitating human beings. The finer shades of enchantment vanished. However, the visitors enjoyed themselves in the little theatre that had been built for the life-size dolls, addicted, as they were, to *fantoccini* in any form.

Meanwhile, Broom went on flourishing, and by the time three or four issues had appeared, was established on safe ground and had gained a solid reputation at home and abroad. As the editorial policy was catholic in tone, no one school was favored at the expense of any other. Traditional fashions hob-nobbed with modern experiment, although the latter still predominated; and the work of unknowns stood vis-à-vis to that of older writers and artists. But friction had effected an entrance into the editorial offices. Harold inclined more and more toward Europe and established reputations, and Krimmie toward America and the future. As Harold was financing the venture and running the material risks, it was natural he should have the last word whenever the partners disagreed; and as European manuscripts and drawings for reproduction could be had at a rate much lower than things from overseas, European artists were deferred to. Krimmie realized the necessity of keeping the department of expenditures as low as possible, but he hated to see the cause he had espoused so long and passionately sacrificed or reduced accordingly. Famous Europeans were adequately taken care of by The Dial and other progressive American periodicals and publishers. Broom was not pursuing its destiny by travelling over territory laid out by these older ventures. And as he had never had the least interest in improving the circulation of a magazine through the employment of well-known names, he felt himself hampered in serving his own ideals. He had a complete disregard for what most of his fellow-countrymen defined as success. And a quixotic devotion to beginnings and new beginnings. This is

what had kept him at Others for nearly three years and what had dragged him out of editorial retirement for still another fling at definite horizons and practical visions.

Other factors and untoward incidents combined in forcing Krimmie into a position unsympathetic to his continued partnership in the venture. For nearly a year he had scarcely written a line, because of the exhausting demands of Broom. Fundamentally, he was a writer first and a propagandist second, and a further juxtaposition of the two rôles, at a time when he had had to compromise with the latter, threatened to suffocate the many new demands of the creative urge that had begun to assert themselves through his contact with Europe. Secondly, the atmosphere of Rome continued to chill his energies and stultify his love of dawns and worship of sunlight. Lastly, even his old friend, the material wherewithal, stuck a dainty stiletto into him. One beautiful morning, it was announced that the immemorial Banca di Sconto had failed. As this was the one bank in Rome in which Krimmie had deposited an account, he was subjected to another novel experience. After a short conference, Harold offered him a nominal sum for his partnership rights in Broom, and he accepted.

Edward Storer took Dorothy's place on the paper. Having contributed to Broom the now well-known translation of Pirandello's Six Characters In Search Of An Author, and having had considerable editorial experience of his own, this large, docile gentleman looked like an excellent choice. And the person who took Krimmie's place—by taking charge of the New York office—was his old friend and former ally, Lola Ridge. There was many a cause for believing that Lola, with her vision and scrappy propensities, might still do new things with Broom. Krimmie could not have asked for a more valiant successor and was happy that an opening had come to Lola which he would have been the first to sanction had he had any vote in the election. . . .

XI

RAPALLO AND PALLANZA

A FEW days later, Dorothy and Krimmie were seated at one of the French windows of the Hotel Continental in Naples looking out over the Mediterranean. Their post and posture did not mean they were longing for home. They were excitedly waiting for the first sign of the steamer Canopic, on board of which two of Dorothy's sisters were due. There had been considerable correspondence among the sisters as to a place for the newcomers to spend the winter, and while no definite plan had been settled upon, and Bee and Flo were not as yet aware the wanderers had resigned from Broom and were free to accompany them, most of the letters had designated the Italian Riviera as the initial abiding place. Krimmie had already taken a trip to Rapallo in behalf of a prospective contributor to Broom—a man with whom he had been in touch for several years past: Gordon Craig. After his return to Rome, with his travelling bag full of manuscripts and designs, Rapallo and the son of Ellen Terry remained for Krimmie the strongest magnets on the continent. With the arrival of the White Star liner, great was the delight of the four people on learning they were free to move about together. The Canopic stayed in port overnight and in the morning carried the family on to Genoa. The following day found them in the port of Cristoforo Colombo and, after a motor trip to Rapallo, they settled in a delicious little hotel buried away in palms and acacias. An entire December of sunshine and recreation spread over them. Krimmie tramped the road up to Sant' Ambrosio, almost without the interruption of a day, and spent long sessions with Craig and his family in the Villa Raggio, a

few steps above the villa of Craig's lifelong friend and fifteen-year neighbor, Max Beerbohm.

Craig, tall, erect, handsome, a younger edition of Franz Liszt in appearance and a descendant of Till Eulenspiegel in his fondness of the world of play, entertained Krimmie with vim and vivacity, the while the latter unbosomed himself of many things nearest his heart. For this pioneer in the theatre arts, the American visitor had an unbounded faith and affection, and it required only the tireless courtesy of the older man, a *cortesia* venting itself in unostentatious acts of generosity, to bind Krimmie to him. For afternoons and evenings on end, they discussed the needs of the theatre, never solemnly or pontifically, but with a simple devotion running the gamut of lightness to seriousness. Craig was not self-centred or *difficile,* as some former callers at Sant' Ambrosio had led Krimmie to anticipate. His love of the theatre was the least personal and most objective attitude of mind Krimmie had ever experienced. The little villa on the hill overlooking the sea was permeated with the warmth, at all times, of Craig's family: his wife, a small, energetic Italian woman, and the two children, Nelly, named after her grandmother, and Teddy, named after his father. Teddy, a serious, fifteen-year-old edition of Craig, seemed indispensable to the latter in every particular. When the father forgot a line from Macbeth he was trying to quote, or could not trace the whereabouts of a certain record, print or article, Teddy would invariably post him quickly and quietly. It was clear to Krimmie from the outset that if anyone was to carry on the work of Gordon Craig, his son was better equipped for the task than any of his many imitators, students or parasites.

One of the most persistent topics of discussion, naturally enough, was the possible source of raising funds for a Craig workshop in Italy. Some years before, thanks to Lord Howard de Walden, Craig had been given such a workshop in Florence,

but, thanks to the war, it had been wiped out, and nothing had taken its place. Somehow, his countrymen had not only failed to provide their foremost theatrical genius with a genuine chance to undertake productions in England, but had shown themselves backward in coming to his aid with a house where he might work out his ideas with students and leave his life-work for the best of them to perpetuate. Furthermore, that beautiful paper, The Mask, and its capricious, colorful offspring, The Marionnette, had been suspended for lack of funds. Craig looked like a man in exile. But he was one who had taken patience and non-compromise along as the companions of his isolation. Considering the worldly success of so many lesser men of the theatre, one and all of whom more or less acknowledged some phase of their indebtedness to the hermit in Rapallo, the childlike good humor and affectionate trust of the man rose to heroic proportions. A note of bitterness crept into his talk now and then, but it was subdued or quashed with the least reference on Krimmie's part to the theatre itself. And so they always reverted to this idolatrous theme, and talked about it without any concern for any personal or worldly factor.

Toward the close of the tourists' stay in Rapallo, Craig was called to Amsterdam to open the international exhibition of the theatre arts arranged by the pioneer Dutch architect, H. T. Wijdeveld. The Craigs wanted Krimmie and his little band—"the man with the three American wives," as Italians loved to describe them—to settle in Rapallo, and had ventured so far as to hunt for a villa for them, a search in which even the Beerbohms had been consulted. But the nomads were forced most gratefully to decline the suggestion since they had not as yet seen much of Italy. Shortly after the departure of Craig and the indispensable Teddy, the three sisters set out for the higher peaks of the Italian Alps, while Krimmie stayed behind to attend to the sundry details of shipping the trunks as soon

as the next address had been decided upon. The address proved to be Pallanza, on Lago Maggiore. While waiting for this news from the north, he took additional walks up the road to the villa in Sant' Ambrosio. There was no breaking the habit. And in view of the fact that, on one of the afternoons up there, he had met the shy neighbor of the Craigs and been invited by him to call next door, he stopped at that next door and timorously pulled the bell.

A terrace and balcony loomed overhead and Krimmie could see Max Beerbohm look down over the edge and hear him say, "Come right up." He threaded his way up a winding stair with the greatest trepidation. The prince of English prose artists was a man so given to solitude that one had no advance certainty as to the reception to be accorded an intruder who pulled at a bell without a more definite appointment. Nor was the first greeting propitious. The gray fedora the author of Zuleika wore remained on his head and the walk up and down the terrace he must have been enjoying before Krimmie's arrival continued. The American walked up and down beside him, venturing a few banal remarks on the heavenly vista, and looking about for the proper moment to make a graceful exit. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Beerbohm asked him to step into the study while he went below for a bottle of Marsalla. The tiny square room, painted in ultramarine, looked like the cabin of a captain at sea. Beerbohm asked him to amuse himself by running his eye along the single row of books around the walls, and called proud attention to the works of Henry James half a shelf wide. Henry was obviously the high favorite of the room, and the guest was asked to note that no two volumes were alike in binding or format. "I dislike uniform editions with their democratic vulgarity."

Approaching the most inconspicuous volume in the group, the quiet æsthete added: "Now there's a novel I take it not

even you Americans have read." Krimmie eyed the volume, on his guard against any prank Craig had warned him his neighbor loved to perpetrate on visitors. But Craig had also advised him: "If you ever call on Max, and he starts one of his hoaxes, don't fail to let him fool you. It'll break the ice between you—Max is inordinately shy." Krimmie innocently reached for the book, tried to take it down, noticed it felt like wood, noticed further the wood had been skilfully painted in a character precisely like the book beside it. A gentle chuckle behind him was accompanied by the remark— "Pardon me while I go for the Marsalla." The man with the gray fedora disappeared, and Krimmie felt more at ease.

A long dialogue ensued, and his host continued to walk up and down. Again and again Krimmie felt he had outstayed his welcome, but the innocent blue eyes and the low, mild voice urged him to sit down once more. Some of the talk concerned Craig—for whom Beerbohm expressed the most unqualified affection—and then drifted away to various writers in England. He drew vivid word-pictures of Shaw, Moore, Wells and other notables, and the few times he expressed a derogatory opinion, the soft, derisive syllable, psh, introduced or closed it. Then followed delicate memories of the 'Nineties, and he showed Krimmie his latest series of drawings—not as yet published or exhibited—the one now known as Rossetti And His Circle. The high, narrow table, hardly more than two feet square, at which Krimmie stood while leafing over the tenderly ironic portfolio, was the place where Max did all his drawing and writing. "I always stand up at my work," he explained.

Presently, Mrs. Beerbohm joined them in the study and Beerbohm announced to her, "Here is a gentleman from the States who has seen you play with Richard Mansfield." Yes, Krimmie added, he had seen her—Florence Kahn as she was known then—play Roxane to Mansfield's Cyrano. The eve-

ning hour was drawing close, and he tried to withdraw, but his host insisted he must first see the rest of the villa. He was shown through a suite of attractive rooms, in the last of which, a small dining-room, three eggs were standing on a table.

"We never take more than an egg at supper," Max declared, "and you're welcome to one."

But alas, Krimmie had not formed the Italian habit of dining at noon and supping lightly. Nor did he wish to stretch this hospitality too far. A kindly compromise was effected. He was asked to call again the next afternoon. The next afternoon a similar session ensued, and again the invitation to the egg. This time he had to excuse himself because he was departing in the morning for Pallanza and had not yet said *au revoir* to the Craigs. After a cordial leave-taking, he climbed to the Villa Raggio, was greeted by Nelly and sat down to supper with Mrs. Craig and the girl. Two eggs lay at each place, and he was tempted to say, "The higher one goes in these hills the more eggs one finds." It was a melancholy evening. The house was intolerably lonely without Craig and Teddy. The family knew no consolation whenever "Papa" was away. Most of the time they roamed the hills until he returned. And with their guest, the melancholy deepened with the regret he felt at having to part with a house and family he loved so profoundly.

The next day he joined his own family in Pallanza. Maggiore, with its great sheets of limpid blue skies and water, and its paradisiacal panorama of snow-covered peaks, set him to dreaming with abandonment. A few days later a villa was found in an adjoining village, a sleepy place called Madonna di Campagna. The house was a three-story affair, crudely furnished, but cosy in every other respect, in the heart of an effulgent garden. The old church of the Madonna lay outside one row of windows and the mountains of the Simplon Pass outside another. The nook was rented for the next few months

and an eccentric servant named Maria joined the establishment. She employed a weird jargon in which smatterings of dialect French and Italian were intermingled. The three sisters managed to understand her and to make their wants known eventually, but Krimmie had to resort to signs and gestures. He had a wonderful stone study overlooking Maggiore and the Alps, and heated by a monstrous kitchen stove that Maria set to chuckling and crackling early every morning. He also had a long kitchen table, long enough for the composition of epics, tragedies and novels. He certainly needed such a table.

Anyone spying over his shoulder or hearing him read aloud to the sisters three would have been amazed at what he was attempting—amazed, that is, had they read his former effort without finding therein the love of form to which he had always devoted himself. His writing had suddenly taken a turn supposedly diametrically opposed to what he had tried heretofore. For several months, without the intermission of a day, he worked at a succession of lyrics and blank verse narratives, and a series of experiments in the sonnet form. There he sat, high in his silent room, so obsessed with the sonnet mania, once the first had been completed after a desperate syllable-to-syllable combat, that he wrestled with the clamorous moods attacking him until forty had been committed to paper. He had never written sonnets before. Nor has he written a single one since.

"What'll people say at home?" Dorothy asked.

"So-called radicals will call me a renegade; so-called conservatives, an unwelcome reactionary. As for myself, I don't know what to say. . . ."

XII

CROSSING THE CHANNEL

CONTINUING north, minus one of the sisters, who had returned to America, the travellers spent two weeks in that tragic country, the Austrian Tyrol, and then settled for the summer in the "Athens of Germany," Munich. Krimmie was much more at home with the German tongue than he had been with the French or Italian and, despite the antipathy to Americans generally, got along fairly well with the Bavarians. Munich was a community he soon learned to love for its tenacious loyalty to the theatre, music and literature. The Bavarians were clearly a poverty-stricken race, with an era of ghastly privation ahead of them, but they desperately clung to art even when the necessities of life failed them. Nor had that ambrosial beverage, *Münchener bier,* in all its shades of South German languor, declined because of the war. The *Münchener* continued to imbibe the same high standard of beer and music, and tourists from everywhere, led by the much hated *Schieber,* imbibed it with him.

Thanks to the boisterous and lavish hospitality of Friedrich Freksa, the stout, Falstaffian author of Max Reinhardt's Sumurun, Krimmie and his ladies were permitted to visit performances at the three court theatres, the Residenz, the Prinz Regenten and the National, as guests of the management. They were happy in finding what they had not found elsewhere: that a dramatic or operatic production was rendered in the house best suited to the requirements of each work. The delicate jewel-box, the Residenz, was reserved for the rococo and intimate, the National for Wagner and the Prinz Regenten for the modern and experimental. At the disposal of the management, a large, diversified repertory company of

actors and singers could be transferred from one work and one stage to another. There was no star system, no long run, no playing of the same type by the same thespian *ad libitum.* A similar ideal was pursued at the independent theatres: the Künstler Theater, the Schauspielhaus and the Kammerspielhaus. Any evening in the week, and especially on Sundays, when extra performances were given, the visitors were reduced to the necessity of debating which of the various productions they ought to attend this time, and with the coming of the annual summer musical festival a confusion of conflicting attractions developed. Most of all, the nomads loved to return to the Residenz, doubtless because of the excusable circumstance that they had not recovered from the thrill imparted to them by Freska at a performance of Mozart's Figaro's Hochzeit, under the refined baton and harpsichord of Kapellmeister Bruno Walter. During the first intermission Freska nudged Krimmie and demanded whether he knew who sat at that harpsichord not so many, many years ago. The information followed that young Mozart himself was the man. Ever after, an imaginary periwig hovered about the head of Bruno Walter, and that stocky Kapellmeister grew slighter and slighter until he had faded into the proportions of the god of the childhood of Dorothy and Krimmie.

Munich was crowded with Americans, and among the familiars the wanderers greeted on the streets or in the theatre were—Pitts Sanborn, the music critic and a contributor to Others; Philip Moeller, formerly of The Washington Square Players and now one of the leaders of its offspring, The Theatre Guild; Lee Simonson, with a similar pedigree; Edward Goodman and Lucy Huffaker, of the Players but not of the Guild; George Middleton, the playwright; Scofield Thayer, of The Dial; Harold Loeb, who had decided to move Broom to Berlin and was now on his way to the German capital; Harry Wehle, of the Metropolitan Museum; Tristan Tzara, who was on his way to Weimar, where he was about to challenge Goethe by delivering a lecture on Dada; Sir Edgar and Leonora

Speyer, who rarely missed a summer in Europe, and the kingpin of the world's tympanists, Henry Louis Mencken. With the exception of Mencken, Krimmie had met all these people formerly.

He had had some correspondence with the co-editor of The Smart Set in connection with Broom and had long since forgotten or disregarded the occasions when he, along with many another writer of verse, had had his ribs beaten in by the lusty rataplan of the Menckenesque drum-stick. The magnificent gusto in the handling of the entire assortment of percussion instruments was a performance Krimmie had enjoyed even at his own expense, and so, when the redoubtable cannibal called at his hotel at eight o'clock on a particularly exhilarating morning, the two went forth for a walk and a talk, fortified by a bundle of fragrant Hamburger cigars. A blue-eyed roisterer walked at Krimmie's side, a kind of gentle butcher-boy on a holiday, given to one generous impulse after another, warm-hearted and romantic. As long as they avoided the subject of poetry, an art to which his companion had not always been hostile—having essayed a volume of juvenile verse Krimmie has been on the hunt for since first he heard the tidings—the two men moved along as smoothly as a pair of student *Gesellen*. In the Munich circles to which Krimmie introduced Mencken, or Mencken Krimmie, the author of The American Language was decidedly at home. Freska called him *"ein ausserordentlicher Kerl"* and wished to enlist him in the service of Prinz Rupprecht, the pretender to the Bavarian throne. But before such *Gemüthlichkeit* could succeed in this benign design, Heinrich Ludwig had to depart for the north, whither he was bound to have a look at the house in which his father was born, and to promenade a certain street which had been christened *die Menckenstrasse*.

Krimmie and his ladies departed for Rotterdam, via Cologne, but not before he had allowed himself to be tempted by another opportunity to disseminate the work of American writers. One morning Leonora Speyer, the poet and violinist—Germans still

refer to her affectionately as Leonora Von Stosch—asked him to accompany her on a visit to the publisher, Kurt Wolff. In the gardens of the famous *Verlag*—a house looking more like a palatial residence than a publishing concern—a discussion cropped up that resulted in a request on the part of the sybaritic Wolff for an anthology of modern American poets. The handsome and volatile Leonora accepted the invitation instanter and insisted Krimmie must co-operate with her. In response to a question as to what man should translate the selected poems, the publisher said proudly: "Germans read poetry in the original—or try to train themselves to do so." Kurt Wolff then showed them the uniform de luxe library to which the American book would be added: anthologies and individual collections in the original French, Italian, Spanish and so on. The gracious Leonora and the once more enthusiastic Krimmie made an appointment to meet in New York in the near future and sit down to their delicate task. "I'll lose all the friends we leave out," she sighed ruefully. "So will I," he consoled her.

One stormy night in the equinoctial season, Krimmie escorted Dorothy and her sister onto the little Dutch steamer, the Ryndam, and for the first time since their marriage parted with his companion. Flo was so homesick for the family, and Dorothy as well, it was decided that they sail to New York together, the while he undertook a short trip to England before leaving Europe. Conrad Aiken was over there, and had just collated an anthology of American poets for Martin Secker, the English publisher, in which Krimmie was given a generous representation. Another inducement for crossing the channel at this time of year was the prospect of a reunion with John Cournos, John Gould Fletcher and Edward J. O'Brien, and a possible meeting with T. S. Eliot. Furthermore, it would be absurd not to visit "the mother island" and discover what if any contact he might have with the land that had given him those ingredients of his speech which had not yet twisted into the

"American language." After a short visit to Amsterdam, he returned to Rotterdam and boarded a dejected-looking steamer barely the size of a ferryboat. But the channel was capriciously calm, and he slept the sleep of a man on *terra firma*. One wintry afternoon he entered London, and engaged a quiet room in Bloomsbury, just off Brunswick Square. The following morning he set out in search of his friends, and the first man he found, naturally enough, was the battle-scarred novelist, John Cournos. They had so much to talk about since their last meeting in New York, nearly ten years ago, it took them the whole of a morning, noon and night in Soho to reach the end of their gossip.

Contrary to reports from fellow-countrymen, Krimmie discovered quite an interest in London for present-day American literature. In British periodicals and journals of the past he had often come upon an implicit hostility to all things American, and like any rebel, resented the patronizing tone and injustice of the attitude. He knew the average islander still looked upon the States as a British colony. Fear and jealousy seemed to have as much to do with the feeling as contempt or superciliousness. The irony of it was that, whereas he prepared himself against such treatment in his own case by putting up his "dukes," the courtesy he received took him unawares and made him drop his guard completely. Always amenable to kindness, he fell into liking the Englishmen he met to a perilous degree. The liking developed so rapidly, he had to raise his guard against himself by the assumption of a little reticence. But this action served to call forth a still more unreserved warmth on the part of his hosts. He even noticed among them, especially in that astonishing fellow, E. Powys Mathers, the Oriental scholar and poet, an instinct of hospitality toward contemporary American poetry. It was not as yet shared by the press or the public. Mr. Squire, the Squirarchy and other Tories employed the pages of The London Mercury and the critical columns of the newspapers in

clever, disparaging efforts to undermine the growth of interest in books overseas. Apparently, these elements did not voice the opinions of English writers themselves—certainly not of those whom Krimmie encountered.

Aiken's anthology of thirteen American poets, opening with Emily Dickinson and closing with William Carlos Williams, had just been issued by Martin Secker. The book was not having much of a press nor much of a sale, but there were enough encouraging signs for an incorrigible hopeful to take it for granted developments were bound to accrue. One day Conrad advised Krimmie to call on Secker—"he liked your play in the volume and asked me whether you have any more." Krimmie had had ideas of issuing a new edition of the Poem-Mimes he had been forced to print privately four or five years before. Little theatres at home continued to write for copies and the original edition was exhausted. So he called on Secker one Saturday morning, found him an unassuming little man, left the book with the customary misgivings and, two days later, received word that the publisher would like to print it at once. To top off this delight, Gordon Craig agreed to write a preface for the volume. The title of the new edition was changed to Puppet Plays, and a play Harriet Monroe had accepted—Pianissimo—was added to the contents. Moreover, even that taciturn Scot, Harold Monro, invited him to edit a number of that most unique and attractive of English publications, The Chapbook, and to devote it entirely to present-day American poets. This Krimmie agreed to attempt as soon as he returned to New York.

The remainder of his sojourn in London was certain, under the circumstances, to tint his glasses with glamorous shades, some of them actual, others illusory. He did not investigate the scientific causes of his emotion nor the mathematical dangers of his illusions. He had never been happier in any other community. . . .

XIII

FROM LONDON TO LIBERTY

Although Aiken had virtually settled in England and bought a house across from the home of Ellen Terry, in the charming old town of Winchelsea by the sea, Conrad was not to be listed as an expatriate. Nor could this term be applied to the man from Little Rock, Arkansas, John Gould Fletcher, who was living in a London suburb but who, like the man from Savannah, Georgia, had fought the battles of American poetry for some time past in a society mostly apathetic or antipathetic. Gaunt, austere, gloomy, Fletcher was easily the loneliest among the many men who haunted the streets of the city of changing mists. Addicted from childhood to lonely people, Krimmie was drawn to Fletcher and enjoyed the rebellious seriousness through which his new friend viewed the world. Abnormally sensitive to the ugly and ephemeral side of things, and deeply embittered by the eternal quest of these on the part of an almost unanimous humanity, John withdrew into himself and communed with mysticism like a hermit in the desert. He had to suffer and suffered with fortitude the annoyance of being eclipsed by the gross popularity paid to much lesser poets than himself. His hatred of charlatans and the acclaim in which the populace held them gave him a savage aspect at times and lent his voice the denunciatory tones of Jeremiah. Because of what he called Krimmie's benevolence—a word that made his companion wince—he seemed to find considerable solace in the latter's society, and a strange affection developed between these antipodeans.

One felt that Fletcher, like Pound, was wasting his time in attacking elements he despised. Like Ezra, John was a much

greater lover than hater. Any deviation from the living practice of the ideal at the bottom of one's heart, expended in denouncing some momentary monstrosity, simply diverted the heavenly powers of the human spirit. So little of oneself got on to paper, and so little of that, if any, passed on to posterity, that every earthly concern of a negative character had to be ignored as much as it was temperamentally possible for one to ignore it. If one had to feel antagonistic to the popular or negative manifestations of the day, T. S. Eliot's balance of disdain and indifference seemed to be a much more sensible and workable medium. But even this gesture, it seemed to Krimmie, had been carried a bit too far.

He spent an evening with Eliot at the latter's apartment in Clarence Gate Gardens. The man was as clearly the expression of the artist as the artist was of the man. The suave intelligence was given over to the pursuit of a refinement of experience from which unnecessary details dropped away with an ironical though almost imperceptible smile. The man was beautiful to look at as well as to listen to, and one could readily give credence to the rumor that he had become the idol of the most exclusive set in Mayfair. Always a little more subtle than the subtlest Englishman, Eliot was the high priest of the best of the younger English poets and essayists. One irate islander, learning of Krimmie's visit to Clarence Gate Gardens, upbraided him: "Are you another of those who pronounce the name of Eliot with a breathless reverence?"

He was glad to learn from Eliot that a new English magazine, The Criterion, was about to appear with himself as the silent editor. The man from St. Louis managed the British with much greater skill than his forerunner, Ezra, had done. His success was due in part to his acceptance of the English manner, which he wore like a native, and his casting off of the American garment and everything resembling it. Krimmie felt hopelessly crude and inarticulate by comparison. He

rather dreaded Eliot might grow subservient to the dominant influence, however laudable, of his flawless scholarship. It might eventually thwart instead of nourish his originality; and his extraordinary devotion to the logic of an objective method turn him into a classic before his time. One could almost fancy Coleridge muttering "Subjectivity, objectivity," as Eliot sat drinking his Scotch and soda and fixed Krimmie with a probing eye, the while the latter talked like the mad hatter in an effort to express himself precisely. His host had asked him a casual question about writing for puppets, and the man from Manhattan lost himself in a subjective dithyramb no conscious regard for objectivity could control. Finally he blurted out—"What I mean is something like the dedication Beethoven wrote over the score of the Missa Solemnis—*Vom Herzen, mag es zu Herzen gehen.* This is how one cannot help writing for them." Eliot smiled his sphynx-like smile and nodded in a friendly fashion.

When the first issue of The Criterion appeared, with the whole of The Waste Land in it, discussion and debate raged all over London. Krimmie found the rest of the issue of a dulness that discouraged him. However, it was likely that Eliot was playing a game with London, and would gradually chloroform the academes of the city by giving them what they wanted first and then dropping them casually into the Thames. The man was subtle enough to accomplish even this miracle.

Among the men Krimmie met during his stay in London were: Jean de Bosschère, the Flemish poet and artist; Mallick, the Indian philosopher and rebel; Gilbert Cannan, the novelist; Douglas Goldring, the satirist; A. E. Coppard, the magic teller of tales; Messrs. Squire and Shanks of the Mercury; the poets, Aldous Huxley, F. S. Flint, Herbert Read, Martin Armstrong and John Freeman; Paul Selver, the translator of the Capek brothers, and E. Powys Mathers He received from nearly all of these men a quiet hospitality which strengthened his conviction that no race is as courteous as the Englishman

at home. He owed a particular debt of gratitude to the last named. Again and again, especially on that most dismal of days, a London Sunday, Bill, as Mathers was known to his friends, asked Krimmie to climb the many stairs to his chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and again and again the winded Yankee was urged to read aloud, answer questions and discuss the work of contemporary American poets. No man in England, and very few men in America, had as intimate an acquaintance with Yankee poetry as this affectionate and erudite Arabian in an English skin. And he was merciless in his pursuit of further knowledge on the theme.

Edward J. O'Brien, in many respects the leading intermediary of Americans in England, invited Krimmie to his home in Forest Hills, a few miles from Oxford. There was something boyish in Edward's appearance—he never wore anything more dignified than a cap. In his helpfulness to fellow Americans, he became Krimmie's guide and protector in a walk to the old university. Hardly had they entered the fascinating town when a series of introductions led to a request for Krimmie to render a recital at one of the student clubs in Balliol. Conscious of the drollery of himself in the rôle of a speaker at Oxford, and not a little terrified at the prospect, he returned to London fortified by numerous bits of advice from his host. Edward warned him that The Lotus Club was one of the most exclusive and sophisticated in Oxford, that Yeats, Tagore, Bertrand Russell and other redoubtables had addressed it and that the members had a reputation as a group of superfine hecklers. Most of all, he was carefully posted on what not to do and to say, and the pair nearly attempted a rehearsal, so anxious was Edward that his friend make the best impression possible.

The morning Krimmie returned to Oxford, a crowd of expectant-looking people had gathered at the station, many of them dignitaries in black wearing the tallest of high silk hats. Overwhelmed with this phenomenon, the speaker

refused to descend from his coach until the ubiquitous Edward spied and hastily reassured him. The notables had assembled to greet Lord Robert Cecil, who had just come to Oxford by the same train to talk to the members of the Union. Lloyd George had suddenly resigned as Prime Minister and, in accordance with an established precedent, the government had sent Lord Robert to address the students on new policies and answer the customary hecklers. Edward regretted the presence of so distinguished a rival attraction, but hoped there were enough undergraduates who preferred American poetry to British politics. Fortunately this was the case.

Sedulously avoiding, or rather, in his excitement, forgetting Edward's forebodings and forewarnings, Krimmie proceeded so smoothly in his chanting and playing that the hecklers, with the exception of a don who raised the only question of the evening, were silent at the close of the program. A note of the warmest camaradarie prevailed. The next morning, a delegation of young gentlemen called at Krimmie's room at the Mitre Hotel, where he was stopping as a guest of the club, and asked him to address The American Club, composed of Rhodes scholars, in the evening. A larger gathering was present, and there he had the unique sensation of addressing countrymen of his who had had much more success with education than himself. The round of gracious receptions continued, and Krimmie made his escape from Oxford in time to avoid still another delegation. As the train rolled back toward London, he realized that if he had stayed in Oxford much longer he would have strayed into the voluptuous temptation of becoming an aristocratic lounger, with nothing to do but sink into an armchair, with one's ale, pipe and companions always at hand and one's ear everlastingly enthralled. These young men were virtuosi in conversation.

A few days later, through an invitation from Fletcher, Krimmie was present at the first public performance in London of Shelley's The Cenci. But even more than the production of

the Websterian tragedy, superbly given by Miss Thorndike as Beatrice, Mr. Farquharson as the Count and Mr. Casson as the Judge, Krimmie, not unlike Mr. Pepys, was attracted by the audience. It was similar to the one which had welcomed Duse in Rome; the tribute in this instance coming to Shelley nearly a century after the event of the writing of the play. As soon as the curtain descended on the first act, one saw and could not help seeing a white-haired, white-bearded figure rise to his full height and bow on all sides to acquaintances in the audience. He was not the author of The Cenci, but the author of a number of more recent plays, Mr. Bernard Shaw. Nor did the celebrated Irishman sit down until the curtain rose on Act Two. At the close of Act Two, he rose once more and held his position until the curtain for Act Three, and so on to the final curtain. Fletcher, who laughed very rarely, laughed at the persistent apparition and, to change the theme, indicated a shy person with a drooping expression sitting not far from the superman. John challenged Krimmie to a game of guessing and the latter's first attempt was correct—John Masefield. He stumbled over the second completely. During an intermission his host led him out to the lobby, where men and women lounged about in small groups. Krimmie should have been able to connect the abstract, child-like expression and the perpetual flow of speech of a rosy-cheeked gentleman, who did all the talking while another did all the listening, with the author of The Confessions Of A Young Man. But Mr. George Moore fooled him by the phenomenal youthfulness of his appearance. Not far from Mr. Moore and his audience stood a dark, sombre man with a black sombrero pulled down over his eyes—talking to no one and listening to no one—the tragic Arthur Symons. Elsewhere other distinguished figures were spied, until one got the impression that people unknown to some reputation or other had been refused admittance at the door.

Krimmie, smitten with homesickness, notwithstanding the

festivities he enjoyed, now planned an early return to America. He had been in England nearly ten weeks and away from New York nearly eighteen months. Before his departure, a final surprise greeted him. Like Mr. Cabell's Jurgen, he was glad to try everything once, but in his wildest imaginings had never reflected on himself as the recipient of a literary prize. One pleasant forenoon in late November, while he and Aiken were browsing among the books in Harold Monro's Poetry Shop, the Scot blandly announced, after a long interval of silence: "It seems to me I've been reading somewhere you've just won a prize somehow." Krimmie toppled over into the arms of Conrad and faintly called for details. It must have taken Monro another half hour to find the announcement of a hundred-dollar prize from Harriet Monroe's magazine for the poetic play, Pianissimo. Presently, Krimmie found himself sitting opposite Conrad in a cosy ale-house, and the friends drank the health of Cousin Harriet in a tall glass of stout. The prize-winner liked to feel that the city he loved most of all in the states had sent him a message to return.

After securing his passage on the Adriatic, Krimmie was a guest at several parties, the last of which took place at the home of E. Powys Mathers. Mathers called on him to read American poets aloud far into the night and, as a last number, requested a selection from Walt himself: Out of the cradle endlessly rocking. Fletcher, glowering in a corner, wished to hear Walt's Farewell instead. The reader could only manage the first few lines; then turned to the great sea chant. He hated to leave London, but there was a dark creature he had been separated from nearly ten weeks too long. The following morning a small deputation, headed by Mathers, saw him off at the Victoria station and loaded him down with gifts. A few hours out at sea, he received a cablegram as well. It was signed by "the gang." Along with his homesickness for an island overseas, he was homesick for the one he was leaving behind. He might have been seasick besides, had not the old

Adriatic been too phlegmatic and British to feel anything like the upheaval of a mere ocean.

Eight days out, land was sighted and, as the steamer was piloted up the Narrows, Liberty herself came into view in the twilight. Everyone on board was on deck and Krimmie overheard many odd comments on the statue. He himself wondered why the lady looked toward Europe and turned her back on America, but the whim was rudely interrupted by a strange incident. Six sinister-looking men, dragging cameras at their heels, were in earnest conversation with the head steward, and gesticulated in the stealthy fashion one attributes to secret service detectives. Suddenly, the steward nodded toward Krimmie, and to his consternation the six characters descended on him.

"What's up?" he demanded.

The ringleader replied: "You're to be interviewed."

Krimmie drew back. "What about?"

"The state of poetry in Europe—and I have to ask you to be quick about it."

He looked from reporter to reporter, the while the cameras were rapidly righted, and could not resist recalling Pirandello's Six Characters In Search Of An Author. The ringleader added in a confidential tone of reassurance: "We've just come from interviewing Pierpont Morgan on financial conditions in Europe."

"I see," gasped Krimmie. But he didn't see. And, as he spoke about Europe and said a number of vague things concerning the recognition being accorded to American artists over there, and the need at present and for some time to come of the youthful ideals and energies of the new continent in the rehabilitation of the old, he listened to his own voice as if it belonged to someone else. But, as soon as the reporters left him standing there, he realized he was once more back in New York—the latest New York, no doubt—with many sights and conditions he had never encountered before. The interview was certainly one of them. . . .

XIV

THE LATEST NEW YORK

WILDLY delighted to be home again, Krimmie entered upon an immediate round of energetic activities. Dorothy had rented an apartment on West Fifty-seventh Street, and here they settled down for a while. First of all, he had to collate the poems to be issued by Harold Monro in his London Chapbook and to assist Leonora Speyer in the collection requested by Kurt Wolff in Munich. Then he disposed of the American edition of his Puppet Plays and his latest book of poems, Less Lonely, with Messrs. Harcourt and Brace. The same firm issued a biennial miscellany of American poets which he was invited to join. The invitation came in a letter from his arch antagonist in the past—Louis Untermeyer.

The author of Challenge was conscious of the drollery of the situation and worded the letter with so much warm-hearted humor and tact that no one but a confirmed misanthrope could have scorned it. Louis informed him he had been elected to membership by the group which comprised the Miscellany. Their first collection had appeared two years before. Krimmie admired the leading feature of the volume—each contributor was to be his own editor—and, as the group was representative of some of the finest elements in American poetry, regardless of ism or temperament, he accepted.

It was truly a sign of the latest times that a number of former opponents were seated in the same book. This was to be accounted for on the ground that each member did not sacrifice a particle of his own expression. The idea was thus saved from degenerating into groupism and indicated a growing eclecticism in America. The controversy between so-called

old and new verse, traditional and free, was a matter for the most part of yesterdays. The country had begun to recognize poetry as poetry, and not because of the form in which it lay embedded. Krimmie had found himself as unhampered in the sonnet as in the free forms, and as restricted in the latter as in the former. For him, the perennial argument had reduced itself to the opinion that the thing one had to say discovered its own form, and that a man who derided or set one form above another was deprived of the advantages of equipping himself with every available source of experience and expression.

Shortly after the anthologies had gone to press, Krimmie was invited by Marguerite Barker, the genial owner of The Greenwich Village Theatre on Sheridan Square, to conduct a series of Sunday afternoon recitals featuring poets, novelists, musicians and dancers. In the hope that this experiment might lead to the workshop of the arts he had looked forward to for so many years, he accepted the proposal and set about engaging artists. Carl Sandburg, bringing his old guitar all the way from Chicago, opened the series, and he was followed by Dorothy and Krimmie in a recital of poems, music and puppets, Amy Lowell in a reading of her latest poems, Gilbert Cannan in a reading of two plays and an essay, Love Is Greater Than God, Eva Gauthier, in a recital of modern songs, Ratan Devi, in ancient Hindoo and Kashmiri songs, and Waldo Frank, in a talk on the modern novel, illustrated by selections from his own work. Krimmie had also made arrangements with Lindsay, Frost, the Untermeyers, Ethel Leginska and Leo Ornstein. But Vachel had suffered a nervous breakdown somewhere in Mississippi as a result of too many recitals on the road, and the other engagements had to be cancelled because the series did not draw well enough to encourage Mrs. Barker to go on. Though Krimmie had noticed a remarkable growth in the interest toward new movements in the theatre,

and it was obvious that New York was now the most cosmopolitan city on earth, the traditional laziness of the inveterate New Yorker was still in evidence. A few years back, that immortal piece, The Beggar's Opera, had lasted but a week in The Greenwich Village Theatre, simply because the little playhouse was a bit too far from Times Square and the Rialto. Nearly all subsequent ventures engaged in by Mrs. Barker had failed for the same reason.

The Sunday before Krimmie had arranged for the appearance of Leginska and Ornstein in a composers' recital, in which they were to be assisted by the woodwind choir of the Barrère Ensemble, he had to announce that the series would have to be discontinued. Leginska and Ornstein, like the other artists, looked upon the experiment as an opportunity for trying out their own work, instead of being forced to play the conventional programs concert managers demanded of them. Krimmie had met this dynamic pair at one of the evening parties—now the most original in town—given by that cordial hedonist, Paul Rosenfeld, in his studio on Irving Place. Here one found people one had never met before along with those one was happy to see again. And it was one of the few havens where accidental meetings often led to associations expressing themselves in some co-operative work of art. Out of this particular party, not only did Ornstein accept the invitation to play on Sheridan Square, but, despite the failure of the venture down there, asked Krimmie for the permission to set one of his plays to music—a suggestion to which the playwright joyfully agreed.

Notwithstanding every evidence of the cosmopolitanism of his native city, and the development of vigorous local movements like The Theatre Guild, the new Provincetown group and The Neighborhood Playhouse, not to mention the magazines, bookshops and galleries, Krimmie had a feeling that the island was still dedicated to a continued dependence on Europe

for most of the materials as well as the success of beauty. As he had just returned from abroad with evidences that several continental countries, and even England, were looking more and more to the States for the reinvigoration of art, the fetishism of New York intellectual circles seemed to him old-fashioned and anæmic. This worship of things overseas was so indiscriminate in most instances that the poorest European products, or even those which the old countries had found antiquated and had discarded, were accepted by the cognoscenti in preference to some of the fresh, crude, vital products of the native soil. In addition, practically all of the native groups on the island had hardened into rigid cliques, so that any man outside had no chance whatever for a hearing among them—unless he happened to be a clever fellow and an adroit politician. The pernicious side of log-rolling had even descended—doubtless in self-defence—to the new generation—or what Robert Frost ingeniously dubbed the "sapling rollers."

Krimmie knew his home town well enough to see that the competition was so intensive and the worldly fortune of any man so capricious, that men of a stripe were almost forced to herd together in the interests of self-preservation. But as soon as these interests led to compromise—usually after the first success—the ideal which had drawn them together disintegrated. While he welcomed the progress effected during his absence, he still looked across the boundaries of New York for what he felt to be the continued hope of the country. The present city was an immeasurable improvement over the city in which he had been born. Many of the tragic material problems confronting artists of former generations had been solved or nearly solved for artists of the present generation. There was now that quintessential medium, a background and an audience. No longer did a man have to wait year upon year for a hearing. No longer did he have to dig up a good part of his best energies toward providing manure for the soil. But

in the greater ease through which he found his publisher and public, a man had to beware of locking elbows with the added lure of the commercial régime. So many movements that had started with a simple, honest challenge, had won their way to recognition and, instead of driving forward on the wings of the original impulse, sought the first victory again by repeating themselves *ad infinitum*. Even so-called radicals had achieved a type of trade-mark through which one might the more readily recognize them in the midst of the dazzling, dumbfounding, competitive appeals to one's taste.

For the man who was still determined to live and express his own life, and to undertake his livelihood without an eye on the market place, the latest New York was no great improvement over its forerunners. As far as Krimmie was concerned, there was still the road and many openings along new byways. The little theatre movement for one, such as it was, encouraged the playwright who did not fit in or trouble himself with the commercial régime. There were now about three thousand experimental groups throughout the country, and the royalty statements Krimmie received from his dramatic agent were romantic documents listing a parade of names and places, a good many of which were unknown to him and not easy to find on a map. Many islanders were fond of attaching the contemptuous epithet, amateur, to the little theatre and similar movements—blandly unconscious of the fact that no greater misfortune could have come to the professional Broadway theatre than the loss of the finest asset in any work of art—the amateur spirit. . . .

Shortly after the last of the Sunday recitals on Sheridan Square, Krimmie went on the road again—first through the Middle West, with a stop at Ann Arbor at the invitation of Robert Frost, now stationed at the University of Michigan, and then through New England, beginning with Wellesley

College, at the request of that courteous veteran of poetry, Katherine Lee Bates. He was gratified with the growing responsiveness to contemporary affairs among undergraduates everywhere. Assuredly, the young men and women of the day were advancing over their forerunners in this respect, and one was fairly safe in assuming that so much feeling for things of the spirit among so many members of the new generation promised well for the morrow. There was now a soil for them to work in, a tradition to develop, modify or destroy, a perspective against which they might measure their personal effort. Let the average educational institution thrive on dedicating its major energies to the propagation of practical men and women, there was usually one member of each faculty and a small group of students supporting Krimmie's confidence. There were now many groups—like the one at the University of Chicago—striking out for themselves in verse, prose, plays, magazines and little theatres of their own.

The following summer, Dorothy and Krimmie tried still another experiment in solitude. Through the kind offices of Herbert S. Gorman, the poet and critic, they were admitted to membership in the MacDowell Colony in Peterboro, New Hampshire, and thanks to the "benevolent tyrant" of the institution, Mrs. Edward MacDowell, were given a studio in the depth of the woods. Here, the pair started working early in the morning until six in the afternoon without interruption. The unusual activities of the place provided a stimulus of the highest order and under it Krimmie spent the busiest summer in his experience. A varied host of writers, musicians, painters and sculptors had gathered for the season and so productive were these people that the beautiful, rolling acreage had the aspect of a factory, with all hands independent of one another and no foreman to spy on them. The monastic isolation, undisturbed even at luncheon, when some person silently deposited a basket on each of the porches throughout the colony,

and the knowledge that under no circumstances, except by invitation, were visitors allowed to disturb the hermits, had a magic effect on the denizens of The Pine Studio. In the course of four hectic months, Krimmie composed the nucleus for a new book of poems, finished several one-act plays, a few things on the mandolute and finally, a full-length play he had been planning for years, but had never had the requisite leisure to sit down to. It was a fantastic comedy in symphonic form, in which free, blank and rhymed verse were employed in accordance with the unfoldment of the plot. Two poets, a radical and a conservative, played the leading rôles in the surrounding atmosphere of an American community. In his late teens, he had wanted to do something of the sort and had written The Symphony Of Love he destroyed so soon after. Being a much less solemn fellow on the eve of forty, and somewhat aware of his limitations, he was content with a much lighter series of movements and a much less pretentious title—There's A Moon To-Night.

Among the friends they made at the colony were the poets and co-authors of Carolina Chansons, Du Bose Heyward and Hervey Allen. These gentlemen invited Krimmie to visit Charleston and proposed to help him engineer some additional recitals in the South. Mainly through the pioneer effort of Du Bose, a poetry society had been founded in Charleston, and under its inspiration a number of other Southern societies had developed. It followed that Krimmie was also engaged by the Poetry Societies of Georgia and of Maryland. Lizette Woodworth Reese was generously responsible for the Baltimore engagement. The pugnacious little old lady was fond of assuring Krimmie: "You'll be buried like the rest of us—in a nice, conservative coffin." He managed to fill in several dates *en route* and, early in a mild November, undertook his first tour below the Mason and Dixon line. It was a balmy, novel adventure. The various communities lived up to their reputation

as hospitable bodies and gave evidences of the revival of poetry in the south—a revival of national significance.

On the way home from his last stop, Baltimore, he had barely settled down to his latest memories, when a hulk of a man passed him and sat down several seats to the rear. Krimmei had met this gray giant somewhere several years ago. Could it be Theodore Dreiser? No man could look like Dreiser except Dreiser himself. It was a coincidence Krimmie decided to take advantage of. He moved to the rear and, as casually as possible, sat down beside the author of The Genius. The ponderous one glowered, until Krimmie reintroduced himself. The mountain smiled gravely and gave him more room. A mutual "What are *you* doing here?" began a curious dialogue, with Dreiser asking most of the questions—blunt, direct thrusts.

Krimmie told him about his recent jaunt, and the realist grunted sceptically. He would not believe any good could come out of the small towns of the country, and his neighbor had to support his contentions with facts and figures—always a favorite pastime. He recalled a similar discussion with Sinclair Lewis in Rome, and was delighted to find himself now going over the ground with the father of the modern American novel. But Dreiser continued to grunt. The thing was incredible. He himself, to be sure, had recently turned down an offer for a series of appearances on the road in readings from his novels. This much he would admit. But that people turned out in sufficient numbers to enable a poet to earn his way through life—he didn't want to call Krimmie a liar, but he surely sounded like one. There must have been some immediate cause for Dreiser's immovable pessimism. His neighbor turned around and questioned him.

It gradually emerged that the novelist was returning from Washington, whither he had gone to attend a conference of leading citizens from his birthplace in Indiana. These noble

Rotarians, Kiwanis and Legionnaires had suddenly gone in for home-town boosting, after the fashion prevalent throughout the land, and had raised a respectable sum of money toward advertising the place. It had been decided that what they needed first and foremost was some sort of a record of the past. The best manner to begin beautifying a community lay in erecting some statues, and the quickest way to get at this job was to find the names and doings of those men who had brought fame to the town. After digging among the relics of the place, the name of Paul Dresser was unearthed. No others had been discovered so far, but the leading citizens were satisfied that the composer of On The Banks Of The Wabash, a song universally popular some years ago, was a host in himself. The committeemen had called a meeting in Washington, the home of the nation's own monuments, to discuss ways and means of erecting the very best monument of the very best material to the memory of their leading spirit. Paul Dresser had a brother somewhere who went by the name of Theodore Dreiser, and telegrams were dispatched to this remaining scion of the family urging him to be present at the conference. Dreiser had evidently had a strange time down there, but never for a moment in his tale did his gentleness abate in the telling.

Krimmie deftly changed the subject by asking what else he had been doing all these years. "It's been some time since we've had a new novel from you."

"I'm never in a hurry," the gray giant responded. "There'll be a book some time soon I've been at for years—if I ever finish it."

"What do you call it?"

"An American Tragedy."

Krimmie whistled with pleasure. "Quite a title," he ventured.

"And quite a tragedy," Dreiser added quietly. . . .

CODA. FOLK SONG

A LITTLE respite and tranquillity now came to Dorothy and Krimmie, and finding themselves on the eve of a new decade, they enjoyed taking a bit of stock of the past. She was approaching thirty and he forty, and they laughed at each other's wistful complaint—How old I am. Likewise, the approach of the twenty-fifth year of the twentieth century brought them a host of symbols and interpretations not necessarily inherent in the figures themselves. Figures were always playing tricks on Krimmie's imagination, and his reflections and conclusions were motivated by the sudden interest that had sprung up throughout the country in the matter of national stock-taking. An invisible curtain had descended on the first scene—or what people liked to fancy the first scene—of the birth or the renascence of America in poetry, the novel, the short story, the theatre, music, painting, sculpture and architecture—and not only critics, but men and women who had been engaged, consciously or unconsciously, in the movement, stood off for a while in perspective before plunging into action again. It might have been called an occupation with "theories after the performance," a sitting down of an evening following a hard day's work at desk, easel or keyboard, for a discussion, not so much of what one had done, but of what one had tried to do. The critical weighed the creative for the first time, so it seemed, dispassionately. Many a moment was spent in the consideration of what-have-I-done, what-have-I-still-to-do, and a type of folk song rose on the wings of so many meetings and so much talk. A lot of fine words passed to and fro and were used or abused to express a lot of fine things, and among them long ones like objectivity, impersonality, detachment, were

popular. The words did not describe the recent performances so much as they did the ideals of a new age looking back on those deeds or half-done deeds in retrospect. And there was a human longing, by no means new, that the deeds were nearly equal to one's hope or theories about them.

In the midst of this hour of joy, pessimism, prophecy—the tone a particular individual brought to a general discussion—Krimmie was faced with what he felt to be the most momentous birthday he had greeted so far. He was not yet bald or gray, lined with wrinkles, cold in the blood or middle-aged, but he utilized a good deal of time in portentous scowling and metaphorical speech. Dorothy always knew this to be a sign of still another combat with pads and pencils, and left him in peace, let him take long walks by himself, warned others against disturbing him. It happened they were living in a bungalow on the outskirts of Asheville, North Carolina, and doubtless a return to the solitude of a place distant from the island of his birth influenced Krimmie even more than the forthcoming birthday. At any rate, when that day arrived, and Dorothy had finished consoling the old man he was at last, he, true to his love of figures and symbols, put down a hasty paragraph or two—so that, if the thing went any farther, he might be able to say: I started this on my fortieth birthday. Then he hastened downtown, visited the nearest stationer, laid in a heavy supply of pads and pencils, and returned to the house in the woods. Far from frowning at the sight, Dorothy greeted it joyfully. She was invariably happy when he was happy, and he was happiest when he was haunted. He had that haunted look now, and though she knew what a long period of travail, groaning and despair lay ahead, she preferred it to the lonely, inconsolable expression he carried about whenever his heart, brain and hand refused to work—and he was sure he was through.

The next few days, the next few weeks, the next few months,

saw him at work at a table by a window, and there he tried to walk around himself, and to record what he found in the round on a flat surface. Mindful of a young man, eyeing the past from the supposed vantage-point of a superior detachment, writing an essay called The Ashes Of An Unconscious Humorist; mindful, as well, of a man much older than his present self, who loomed over his shoulder, read what he was writing and smiled indulgently—Krimmie wrote and rewrote, wrote and rewrote the thing that haunted him. Inspiration, aspiration, expiration—he mumbled in a trance—*Wahrheit und Dichtung*—subjectivity, objectivity—and many other phrases, in an effort to help himself believe that what he set down was an impersonal picture of a personal experience. Sometimes he mumbled the German proverb his father had sung at him, *Noch so alt und doch so dumm.* For some reason he did not try to explain, the proverb comforted and helped him go on once more.

A few months later, Krimmie was still at it and it at him. Now he was seated at another window in another room in another town—New York itself—and old Fourteenth Street, as well. In his love of romance, it seemed inevitable that he should be housed in a room diagonally across from the one at the top of 232. They had searched everywhere else for a suitable home, and the place they eventually found—so far superior to anything else they had examined—was this long, lofty studio in a solitude and silence in the heart of New York. Some of the denizens of 232 were still across the way, and those who had moved elsewhere, he sometimes met or passed on the street. When knuckles knocked at his new door, he was not surprised to find old faces outside—old faces still fairly young. And there were enough landmarks to assure him that what had once existed still existed. As he tried to touch the past, some of it responded and made what he was trying to do—he with his uncertain memory in the tumult of an ever-changing present—

sharp enough for him to seize this or that particle in the round. But how few there were of these to what had happened. And how little he would be able to record of later days and later people. And how little, too, were he sitting somewhere else, twenty years hence, looking back and grappling with silent things so alive and overwhelming right now.

As another tenth of December came along, and the book grew stouter and stouter and he thinner and thinner, Dorothy, sometimes from one corner, sometimes from another, sent him many an anxious glance. When she asked him one day, in a way demanding an unevasive response—"Is there no end to this thing?——"

He could only sigh, smile and shake his head.

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